



DEATH EMBODIED

*Archaeological approaches to
the treatment of the corpse*

Edited by Zoë L. Devlin & Emma-Jayne Graham

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Studies in Funerary Archaeology Volume 9

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Zoë L. Devlin and Emma-Jayne Graham



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INTRODUCTION: EMBODYING DEATH IN ARCHAEOLOGY

Emma-Jayne Graham

In April 1485, an unprecedented discovery was made on the outskirts of Rome. A marble sarcophagus, itself relatively unremarkable, was opened to reveal the well-preserved body of a young woman. Over four hundred years later, the nineteenth-century archaeologist Rodolfo Lanciani collated a series of contemporary accounts describing the discovery, amongst which were the following evocative passages:

The body seems to be covered with a glutinous substance, a mixture of myrrh and other precious ointments, which attract swarms of bees. The said body is intact. The hair is long and thick; the eyelashes, eyes, nose, and ears are spotless, as well as the nails. It appears to be the body of a woman, of good size; and her head is covered with a light cap of woven gold thread, very beautiful. The teeth are white and perfect; the flesh and the tongue retain their natural colour; but if the glutinous substance is washed off, the flesh blackens in less than an hour.

(Diary of Antonio di Vaseli, cited in Lanciani 1892, 295–296)

... a young girl, intact in all her members, covered from head to foot with a coating of aromatic paste, one inch thick. On the removal of this coating, which we believe to be composed of myrrh, frankincense, aloe, and other priceless drugs, a face appeared, so lovely, so pleasing, so attractive, that, although the girl had certainly been dead fifteen hundred years, she appeared to have been laid to rest that very day. The thick masses of hair, collected on the top of the head in the old style, seemed to have been combed then and there. The eyelids could be opened and shut; the ears and the nose were so well preserved that, after being bent to one side or the other, they instantly resumed their original shape. By pressing the flesh of the cheeks the colour would disappear as in a living body. The tongue could be seen through the pink lips; the articulations of the hands and feet still retained their elasticity.

(Letter written by Daniele da San Sebastiano, cited in Lanciani 1892, 296)

The remains of the woman were transported immediately to the Palazzo dei Conservatori in order to be viewed by ‘a large crowd of citizens and noblemen’ (Antonio di Vaseli, cited in Lanciani 1892, 295) composed ‘especially of women attracted by the sight’ (letter dated 15th April 1485, among Schedel’s papers in Cod. 716 of the Munich library, cited

in Lanciani 1892, 298). These eyewitness accounts offer some sense of the incredulity that the discovery provoked, and the attention that the body of the woman received from the diarists and letter writers of Rome. She was evidently subjected to much prodding and poking by those who went to see her and, beyond the elasticity of her limbs, it was even reported that ‘if one drew the tongue out slightly it would go back to its place of itself’ (Lanciani 1892, 299). As well as assembling the evidence for the recovery of the sarcophagus and the human remains within it, Lanciani also commented on their unfortunate fate: after several days of exposure to the air, and the removal of the perfumed coating, the body rapidly turned black and decayed. He notes that she was ‘most abominably treated’, eventually being buried under cover of darkness at the foot of the city walls or possibly even thrown into the Tiber (*ibid.*, 301).

A discovery such as this was unusual in the fifteenth century but would nevertheless be extraordinary even today, when we might assume that this woman would become the focus of similarly intense (media) scrutiny. We have become so accustomed to our archaeological encounters with the people of the past taking the form of skeletal remains that the presence of malleable flesh, fluids and other organic materials still has immense emotive power, as the continued widespread interest in the recovery and subsequent investigation of mummified remains attests. This fascination with the customarily absent corporality of archaeological remains might also be linked with the modern desire to ‘re-flesh’ the bones of the long dead with increasingly sophisticated techniques of facial reconstruction which seek to enable people to connect more easily with, and to somehow understand better, the character of these people as living humans. The discovery, in 2012, of the remains of King Richard III in Leicester, and the rapid facial reconstruction which followed, provide an instructive example of how important this sort of encounter might be within both the public and academic consciousness (on facial reconstruction see Prag and Neave 1999; Wilkinson 2004).

Interestingly, Lanciani (1892, 301–305) parallels the treatment of the body of the unknown woman with that of another, much more poorly preserved young woman found in 1889. In this instance her sarcophagus, inscribed simply with the name Crepereia Tryphæna, was discovered embedded in clay on the right bank of the Tiber, close to the tomb of the emperor Hadrian. It was found to be filled with water and, when opened, ‘we were almost horrified at the sight before us. Gazing at the skeleton through the veil of the clear water, we saw the skull covered, as it were, with long masses of brown hair, which were floating in the liquid crystal’ (*ibid.*, 302). Ultimately, it became apparent that the ‘hair’ was in fact an aquatic plant which had attached itself to the skull whilst the body had been submerged by river water, although news of her apparently ‘prodigious hair spread like wild-fire among the populace of the district ... and its remembrance will last for many years in the popular traditions of the new quarter of the Prati di Castello’ (*ibid.*, 302). Presumably, it was the prospect that this girl, who had died some 1700 years before, might still retain the appearance of a recognisably living human (enhanced by the ethereal aura of the watery setting) that piqued the interest of scholars and public alike. It was this mirage of corporeality which caused Lanciani to juxtapose her discovery with that of the body of the unknown woman from several centuries earlier.

The preservation of a number of items within this second sarcophagus, including a jointed doll made from oak and a considerable number of items of jewellery and toilet equipment, as well as the skeleton itself, made it possible to determine that Crepereia Tryphæna had died at the beginning of the third century AD, was probably from a family of freedmen (former slaves), and had suffered from scrofula which had caused her ribs to become deformed. She had been betrothed to Philetus, whose name was engraved on an engagement ring worn on her left hand (*ibid.*, 303–304). Once the remains had dried out it became apparent that the young woman had been wrapped in a white linen shroud, and a wreath of myrtle with a silver clasp had been placed on her head (*ibid.*, 303). Other questions were posed by Lanciani (*ibid.*, 304) about this young woman: ‘At what age did she die? What caused her death? What was her condition in life? Was she beautiful? Why was she buried with her doll?’ The questions that he asked (and was able to answer) bear some similarity to the types of questions that archaeologists well over a century later might ask of the same discovery. Questions of identity, health and cause of death, as well as those relating to the presence of the doll (and other grave goods) would undoubtedly be at the forefront of any modern investigation, even if it is unlikely that one of the first questions asked by a 21st century archaeologist would be to consider the extent of her beauty! Nonetheless, scientific developments and, equally importantly, an increased concern with the study and interpretation of the treatment in death of the human body itself, mean that Lanciani’s enquiries satisfy our modern concerns only partially. It would not take long to compile a list of questions that *could* be asked of the evidence in the light of more recent post-processual, cognitive and bioarchaeological approaches to mortuary behaviour. The manner in which her body had been treated, both in life and death, would feature much more prominently in modern discourse: had she been embalmed or otherwise prepared and what evidence is there for the substances and materials used for this? How can we use the evidence for perfumes and unguents to reconstruct the sensory experience of her funeral and burial? How was her body arranged in her coffin and what might this mean? What was the significance of the shroud and what are its implications for the preparation of her body prior to burial? What can we learn from her remains about the health and death of members of the ancient community who suffered from disease and potential deformity? What part, if any, did the fact that she suffered from scrofula play in her experiences and identity whilst alive as well as the choices that were made about the manner and location of her burial? The list could go on.

Archaeological bodies

The examples cited above highlight the two issues which form the core of this volume. Firstly, they remind us of the power of the dead body to evoke in the minds of living people, be they contemporary (survivors or mourners) or distanced from the remains by time (archaeologists or non-specialists), a range of emotions and physical responses, ranging from fascination to fear, and from curiosity to disgust. This need not be restricted

to the fleshed body, still recognisable as a once animate individual, but might extend also to skeletal remains which emphasise, and thereby remind us of the inanimate biological reality of death (see papers in Gowland and Knüsel 2006). What is more, the different nature of the preserved remains of the two Roman women highlights for us the variety of forms that a human body might take over the course of its life and death, and provides a glimpse into the range of responses that might affect the way in which these bodies are understood, experienced or treated.

Secondly, these human remnants of the Roman past which drew the attention of Lanciani and others emphasise just how central the human body is to burial practice. This may seem like an obvious point to make: of course there is a dead body at the centre of the funeral, except in unusual circumstances, otherwise there would be no need for the funeral in the first place. However, it is one that is often overlooked until, like the crowds in fifteenth century Rome, we are confronted with it directly, in all its fleshy, material glory. Archaeological interpretations are sometimes written in such a way as to suggest that the skeletons which we uncover, and therefore usually associate with past funerary practices, were what was deposited in graves, rather than articulated corpses. In these instances ‘body’ essentially means ‘skeleton’ and we have developed a collective tendency to think of the dead body in terms of bones and the living in terms of flesh and fluids. Even studies which prioritise a body-centred approach to funerary remains might still give disproportionate attention to the skeletal evidence and think primarily of the ‘bodies’ under scrutiny in such terms (Gowland and Knüsel 2006, for example, present an excellent collection of papers but many of the contributors write of ‘bodies’ when really they refer only to ‘bones’). Interaction with bones was, and continues to be, unquestionably important in some cultural contexts – bone might be defleshed prior to its final disposal through various means, as well as burials being reopened and whole skeletons or elements of them (re)moved or reinterred elsewhere – but evidence suggests that throughout history this has not been the norm. In the overwhelming majority of instances it was a fleshed cadaver, an actual *body*, that lay at the heart of funerary rites, and it is important that we remember that even those burials which involved secondary treatment, or which dealt with the disposal of already defleshed remains, also involved a fleshed corpse at the very beginning of that process (see, for example, Nilsson Stutz 2003 and 2008 on burials from Mesolithic Scandinavia, as well as Connor 1995 on the significance of the act of washing the corpse).

The choices made by past communities or individuals about how to cope with a dead body in all of its dynamic and constituent forms, and whether there was reason to treat it in a manner that singled it out (positively or negatively) as different from other human corpses, provide the stimulus for this volume. These choices and the motives which lay behind them would, of course, be much clearer to us if we excavated, more regularly than we do, preserved bodies like that of the anonymous Roman woman. It would be much easier to identify and decipher the decisions that were made at the moment of burial, and in the process which led up to it, if we could see, smell or feel for ourselves the materiality of the body with which past mourners or disposal practitioners were confronted, and around which funerary rites were performed. Unfortunately this happens only rarely, and even

when it does we are faced ultimately with a body which has been preserved at a particular moment in a series of potentially protracted activities. This is usually a moment subsequent to the final act in the mortuary process, once the body had been abandoned to the elements which, by chance or design, were responsible for ensuring its preservation. Here one might cite well-known examples of 'bog bodies' such as Lindow Man or Grauballe Man (Green 2001) or bodies preserved by extremes of temperature and aridity including the Pazyryk mummies of the Altai mountains (Parker Pearson 1999, 61–65; Rudenko 1970). Each of these might reveal much about the lives and deaths of individuals, but they nevertheless preserve their bodies at a particular moment of their death: their interment. Even the unknown Roman woman had been buried and the funerary process completed. What we do not find are bodies that were abandoned part way through the ritual process; bodies which had not yet been interred or cremated, or were awaiting the next stage of the preparation process. Moreover, even if we do, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to identify this fact. David Noy (2000), for example, has examined Roman cremations which 'went wrong' and left a body half-burned, but the most convincing evidence for such an event remains that provided by written sources and not archaeological data. We are therefore largely excluded from recognising and investigating these in-between stages of mortuary behaviour by the nature of the evidence available to us. Undoubtedly there must have been occasions on which the funerary procedure or even the moment of disposal itself was interrupted, but the ephemeral nature of these activities means that we must rely on our ability to work backwards from the end result of completed funerals in order to reconstruct the various stages, treatments, behaviours, emotions and rituals that they involved and the impact of the cadaver upon this (Weekes 2008). Moreover, even apparently preserved human remains might not always be what they seem. The realisation that the mummified bodies of Cladh Hallan on South Uist (Outer Hebrides) are actually composed of parts taken from multiple individuals, spanning several generations, provides us with an especially vivid reminder not to take our evidence at face value (Parker-Pearson *et al.* 2005; Parker Pearson *et al.* 2007; Hanna *et al.* 2012). Although a rare instance, this is certainly enough to make us question the meanings and significance that might be placed on the materiality of the corpse, as well as its variability and its manipulation at different stages of the mortuary practice and sometimes across significant expanses of time. It is therefore important that we do not lose sight of the fact that, for the majority of situations, what we excavate reflects only part of the story and in order to begin to comprehend the role that the corpse itself played in determining funerary behaviour it is necessary to explore ways of 're-embodying' burial activities or, in other words, re-introducing bodily perspectives in their widest sense to our discourses on all aspects of past funerary ritual.

Embodying death

Rather than advocate a single approach, this collection of papers is intended to provide a series of theoretically informed, but not constrained, case studies which focus predominantly

on the corporeal body in death. The aim of each of the authors is to ‘embody’ funerary practices by making the human body the central component of their investigations. With this in mind, contributors were free to choose how they wished to interpret the idea of ‘embodiment’ and whether they wished to define it in relation to a study of the bodies of the deceased, the living or in some cases with reference to both. The individual chapters in this volume therefore do not necessarily ascribe wholly to a strictly defined theory of embodiment; indeed some also incorporate insights derived more strictly from phenomenological approaches (notably Stoddart and Malone and to some extent Graham). It is also clear that a single theoretical approach is not always appropriate – there is a place, for example, for the dividual body and ideas about bodily personhood within the world of embodiment which, according to some (Sofaer 2006a, 22), is more commonly defined with reference to the boundaries of a single body (see also Graham 2009).

Against this backdrop, the chapters presented in this volume all focus on questions about what people in the past *did* with bodies in their various material states, and what that can reveal about perceptions of different types of body, not only those that were no longer alive, but also with reference to a range of other identity categories associated with the body, including age, gender, status and power, physical capacity, disability and deformity. These are all factors which play a part in the creation of what Robb and Harris (2013) have recently termed ‘body worlds’ and raise a number of broad questions. How were ways of understanding and interacting with living and dead bodies related both to one another and to wider cultural contexts? How closely connected were understandings of the dead body to contemporary concerns about the living body? What was the impact of the dead body and the manner of its disposal on the materiality or experience of the living body? Consequently, the aims of the volume are threefold: to take account of the active presence of dynamic material bodies at the heart of funerary events and to explore the questions that might be asked about their treatment; to explore ways of putting fleshed bodies back into our discussions of burials and mortuary treatment, as well as interpreting the meaning of these activities in relation to the bodies of both deceased *and* survivors; and finally to combine the insights that body-centred analysis can produce to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role of the body, living and dead, in past cultures.

(Re)introducing the body

Within the humanities and social sciences, including archaeological and historical scholarship, it would appear that the human body needs no (re)introduction. Anthropological and sociological research concerning ‘the body’ and its role in religion, memory, mortuary ritual and identity negotiations has a long history (to cite merely a few examples from different disciplines: Asad 1997; Battaglia 1992; Busby 1997; Coakley 1997; Conklin 1995; Connor 1995; Hallam and Hockey 2001; Hallam, Hockey and Howarth 1999; Hertz 1960 [1907]; Huntington and Metcalf 1979; Shilling 2003; Sofaer 2006a; Tilley 2008; Turner 1996; Van Gennep 1960 [1909]). This has, in recent years, been matched

by innovative work on the archaeological body. The vitality and potential of this area of research is reflected by a number of major review articles which chart the rise and development of body-centred research in archaeology, as well as spotlighting its inherent complexities (Fisher and Loren 2003; Joyce 2005; Meskell 2000; Shilling 2008). Moreover, a number of multi-period edited collections have brought together work which takes a perspective on the human body in both archaeology and history (Borić and Robb 2008; Fahlander and Oestigaard 2008; Garrison 2010; Gowland and Knüsel 2006; Hamilakis, Pluciennick and Tarlow 2002; Harris and Robb 2013; Hopkins and Wyke 2005; Hughes, Rebay-Salisbury and Sørensen 2010; Montserrat 1998; Rautman 2000). Some of these have arisen as the product of major projects designed to address the human body from specific perspectives, such as the Leverhulme supported *Changing beliefs of the human body* project at Cambridge University (2005–2009) and the more recent interdisciplinary venture *Harnessing the power of the criminal corpse* based at the University of Leicester and funded by the Wellcome Trust.

Recent studies of the varied ways in which bodies might play an active role in constructing, shaping and maintaining not only society but also individual identities and experiences of the world, have become instrumental in altering the ways in which the people and communities of the past, and present, are understood. In addition to studies of the living body (Cleland, Harlow and Llewellyn-Jones 2005; Corbeill 2004; Meskell and Joyce 2003), body adornment and modification (Bazelmans 2002; Geller 2006), and representations of the body in art (Gillespie 2001; Joyce 2008; Osborne 2008; Squire 2011), the body in death has come to the fore as a central component of archaeological investigation. Themes which feature at the core of this research highlight its importance for extending existing understandings of the significance of the corpse for past social, religious and political relationships in a number of original and exciting directions: experiences of the corporeal body (Graham 2011; Nilsson Stutz 2003 and 2008; Tarlow 2002; Williams 2004), fragmentation of the corpse and circulation of body parts (Brück 2006; Chapman 2000; Fowler 2002 and 2004; Jones 2005; Thomas 2000), secondary treatment (Graham 2009; Weiss-Krejci 2001, 2005 and 2008), cannibalism or post-mortem mutilation (Bendezu-Sarmiento *et al.* 2008; Hamilakis 1998; Knüsel and Outram 2006), transformation of the cadaver by fire (Sørensen and Rebay-Salisbury 2008; Williams 2003), disability and deformity (Crawford 2010; Graham 2013; Hadley 2010) and the materiality of the body (Sofaer 2006a and 2006b; Thomas 2002). As a consequence, it has become increasingly evident that the dying and/or dead body creates not only problems but also opportunities for communities, and an acknowledgement and desire to understand the complexities of these responses is now beginning to frame studies of mortuary activities, mourning, commemoration, memory and other socio-cultural behaviours.

Nonetheless, as recently as 2008, the following statements could still be made in three separate works: that within archaeological discourse the human body is 'both omnipresent and invisible' (Borić and Robb 2008, 1); that 'the body as such remains conspicuously rare within the archaeology of the body' (Nilsson Stutz 2008, 21); and, from a sociological perspective, 'the body is named as a theoretical space, but often remains relatively neglected

as an actual object of analysis' (Shilling 2008, 9). Liv Nilsson Stutz, working largely on the archaeology of Mesolithic Scandinavia, has been particularly vocal in this respect, calling repeatedly for studies which take heed of Lynn Meskell's observation that 'body' is too often used simply as a synonym for 'person' (1996, 14, cited in Nilsson Stutz 2003, 89). She argues that archaeologists must take account of the materiality of the dead, or in other words consider what an actual dead body *is*, not just what it represents, and the impact that this has on its treatment and the attitudes, perceptions and actions of the living. In particular she notes (2008, 19) that:

bodies are more than metaphors. They are flesh and blood, organs, ligaments and bones, gases and fluids. This becomes especially obvious at death, when the embodied social being is transformed into a cadaver, continuously in a state of transformation, an effect of the processes of putrefaction and decomposition ... the recognition of this aspect of the body – long almost an exclusive domain for bioarchaeologists – deserves the attention also from archaeologists interested in developing insights into past experience of death and the body.

The papers in this volume respond to this by examining the ways in which the materiality of the cadaver was implicated in the development or enactment of specific funerary behaviour. In some instances particular characteristics associated with the corpses encountered by past communities is shown to have had a direct impact on commonly held understandings and practices (Devlin; Graham). In others, it was the process of decomposition and the materiality of the human body in its skeletal state which made it possible for subsequent manipulations of remains of the dead to take place (Aspöck; Hofmann). These chapters also highlight the importance of variability within mortuary practice for our interpretations of the centrality of the dead body (Perego *et al.*; Rebay-Salisbury), as well as the significance of the location of living and dead bodies in time and space (Stoddart and Malone).

Material bodies

Attention has been drawn to other problems posed by the materiality of archaeological bodies. Joanna Sofaer (2006a, 44) questioned the apparently fixed and unequivocal binary divide between a 'living' and 'dead' body, arguing that there is a need to problematise this perception: 'questioning the boundaries between life and death means that just as understandings of the living body cannot be taken as self-evident or given, nor can those of the dead body'. She argues (*ibid.*, 41) that existing approaches 'do not deal effectively with the specifically archaeological nature of the body as physically present but lifeless', critiquing proponents of agency, embodiment and phenomenology for not incorporating skeletal evidence into their interpretations and focusing largely on the living body. Moreover, she claims (*ibid.*, 45) that the 'the body does not merely reflect life but was once life itself,' pointing towards sociological studies which indicate that there might be various ways of describing a body as it moves from being 'alive' to being 'dead' which destabilise these binary oppositions. A body might, in other words, progress through different stages within the categories of 'alive' and 'dead' which, in turn, become more flexible than they might first

appear. For Sofaer (*ibid.*, 68), ‘the constitution of the body becomes key to its perception and categorisation as dead,’ meaning that without due attention to the materiality of the body in both life and death, as well as the stages of dying that exist in between, archaeologists cannot hope to grasp the significance of the body as the focal point of funerary ritual.

Barring discoveries such as those already described, and a minority of other mummified or preserved corpses, the bodies that archaeologists find are unequivocally ‘dead’ and usually have been for some time. The only other certain statement that can be made about them is that they were once alive, but as Sofaer’s comments emphasise, the stages of the materiality of that body in between these binary points of existence, and the ways in which it might be described, experienced or understood, are, like the stages of mortuary behaviour itself, much more difficult for the archaeologist to recover. Dying is in fact a highly dynamic process that cannot be fossilised in the archaeological record in the same way that the end condition (death) often is. It might be argued, moreover, that even this final state is itself no less dynamic, at least not in the beginning stages, as the body breaks down, putrefies and decays. There can, as a consequence, be multiple ways in which to be ‘dead’.

Responses to these dynamic processes of decomposition can be traced in the archaeological record through the funerary treatment of the body and the recovery of detailed information about how it was processed and finally disposed of. This sometimes involves the adoption of a so-called ‘archaeothantological’ approach to the taphonomy of human burials, as advocated especially by French archaeologists such as Duday (2006 and 2009), although unfortunately such a detailed approach tends to be employed inconsistently (Knüsel 2014). As the chapters presented here demonstrate, there is certainly value in attempting to explore the variety and range of these responses in more detail, based on evidence for how a body was treated and manipulated, as well as evidence for the ritual, social, political and even economic processes, which surrounded this behaviour. Knowing what we know about the biological body, it is possible to speculate about the different, and potentially fluctuating ways in which a body might be considered to be ‘dead’, even if we cannot say the same about definitions of ‘dying’. We can also comment on the state of death as a process that required negotiation, perhaps with different ways of ‘being dead’ coming to the fore at particular moments in funerary ritual (the uncorrupted bodies of saints discussed by Devlin offer a thought-provoking example). In turn, this offers insights which help to explain the particular treatment of the archaeological bodies that we recover, reminding us, most importantly, of the material nature of that body when it underwent such treatment, whether that was as a body recently dead and subject to rigor mortis, undergoing the process of advanced decomposition, or as the defleshed or dry bone that might be instrumental for secondary or ongoing treatment (Rebay-Salisbury; Aspöck). At the same time then, we might begin to bring together the dynamism of the funerary process with the dynamism of the body itself, offering opportunities to identify and investigate the extent to which these may, or may not, be interwoven.

Deviant, non-normative, variable or creative burial?

It is worth noting that this volume provides an examination of the multiple and complex treatments of the corpse that took place in a variety of cultural and historical contexts, but what it does not set out to do is establish whether these might be considered normative or deviant forms of mortuary treatment. This is not, therefore, the place for a lengthy discussion of the terminology or debates related to so-called 'deviant' burial. These are addressed more specifically in the context of individual chapters, and have been discussed at length elsewhere (notably Aspöck 2008; Murphy 2008; Reynolds 2009). Nevertheless, as a term or category, 'deviant burial' necessitates at least some preliminary discussion, not least because many of the examples and case studies explored in the chapters presented here examine evidence that has been, or might be, described in relation to this term. As recent studies demonstrate, attempting to define the extent to which burial treatments can be described as 'normative' or 'deviant' is not always a particularly straightforward or even constructive exercise. In some cases, however, the investigation of funerary treatments inevitably involves a consideration of mortuary behaviour that differs in some way from that accorded to the majority of the rest of the burial community. The difficulty lies, of course, in determining how significant these choices might be and the range of meanings that might be attached to them. With this in mind, chapters in this volume by Aspöck, Hofmann, and Perego *et al.* explore evidence for practices which indicate that the bodies of some members of a community received differing degrees of funerary treatment in relation not only to the manner of their disposal, but also the subsequent manipulation of their remains in apparently secondary, or at least extended, rites. Nonetheless, rather than attempting to consign their evidence to neat binary categories, in each case the information available for these practices is interrogated by the authors in order to address more nuanced questions about what people in the past were choosing to do with dead bodies and their constituent parts, as well as what these decisions might signal. They consider, for example, the problem of how archaeologists make sense of the fact that there were often innumerable ways of interacting with deceased human remains: some which suggest that the bodies of certain people were perceived in more or less radically different ways from their peers, but others that might on closer inspection be revealed to reflect unusual, but nevertheless consistent, expressions of a shared funerary logic. Indeed, Hofmann prefers to speak of a 'field of relations' against which so-called 'deviant' burials might be set, as well as the need to incorporate the potential for 'creativity' into our understandings of what apparently constituted normative practice. Without denying the existence of 'deviant' or 'non-normative' burials, she stresses that it is necessary to be certain of the complexities and fluidity of the parameters against which these are compared.

Juxtaposing these critical perspectives on 'deviant' activities alongside others which examine apparently 'normative' burials, or at least with more easily recognisable, even if sometimes rather unusual encounters with the materiality of the corpse, provides us with an opportunity to consider a number of other issues. This includes the extent to which the identification of a range of possible funerary actions might mean that seeking ultimately to

categorise behaviour is not always productive or appropriate. Rebay-Salisbury, for example, emphasises the blurring of boundaries even between the rites of cremation and inhumation which are traditionally seen as uncomplicated normative customs; whilst Perego *et al.* consider the ways in which distinctive forms of marginality and marginalisation might be brought about and signalled within the funerary record. Importantly, these observations serve to reintegrate studies of deviance with those of bodily treatment, and vice versa. The continued artificial separation of these two avenues of enquiry concerning the handling of the bodies of the dead can only widen the gap further between what is considered normative and what is not. Instead, the chapters in this volume – and not only those concerned directly with definitions of deviancy but also those which address variations in bodily treatment and bodily experience – highlight the need to ask a range of new questions which draw upon both of these lines of enquiry concurrently. Not least, we find in our case studies numerous questions about where lines should be, or even can be, drawn. Even in the handful of papers presented here, the breadth of potential mortuary behaviours and the sheer range of bodily encounters that might be possible suggest that there have always been, and will continue to be, multiple ways in which funerary treatment might differ more or less from what was thought to be customary.

This, in turn, raises additional queries: how do we approach variations which ultimately came to be adopted as ‘the norm’? Here we might, by way of example, consider the transformation of imperial Roman burial customs from cremation to inhumation (Graham). It has never been, and probably never will be suggested that the first Romans to inhumate their dead against a prevailing tradition of cremation were engaging in deviant practice, yet if we take the term at face value and look at these burials in historical isolation, without the benefit of hindsight which tells us that inhumation was soon to be the most commonly practiced rite across the empire, that is exactly what they appear to have been doing. By choosing to inhumate, rather than cremate, these people opted to act in a noticeably different manner from the rest of society at Rome, and even if we might note that their actions were not viewed in a strongly negative light by their contemporaries (or at least not according to the few elite sources available to us), the use of such an obviously different rite would seem to align with the most basic definition of deviation from an established norm. Seen out of context, then, these earliest inhumations could point towards some degree of deviancy or perhaps even socio-cultural marginality. This is, subsequently, something that we might seek to explain in relation to the status of both deceased and mourner, their elite status perhaps prompting us to equate their decisions about funerary treatment with some degree of socio-political distinction or nonconformity. However, re-situated within the bigger picture of long-term variation and change, these burials become simply the first of many within a longer term trajectory and a continually developing funerary logic. In this sense deviancy might be viewed as a positive driver of change, rather than something to be thought of in purely negative terms.

Deviant bodies?

If chapters in this volume consider apparent cases of ‘deviancy’ or ‘marginality’ from a number of alternative perspectives, including their relationship to socio-political exclusion (Perego *et al.*), what about the nature of the physical bodies themselves, rather than the socio-cultural personas with which they were associated: can bodies themselves ever be considered deviant? Is it possible, for example, to identify a relationship between *bodies* which differ in some way from societal expectations and mortuary practices that do not conform to traditional customs? Such an approach would address the concerns expressed by Nilsson Stutz noted above, who echoes Meskell’s observation that ‘body’ is too often used as shorthand for ‘person’ or ‘social identity’, making it possible to interrogate more closely the agency of the material body itself in directing funerary activities. Bodies might in fact be considered ‘different’ for a range of biological or material reasons, connected to a greater or lesser extent with the social role, identity or status of the person to whom they belonged. This might come about because of physical deformities or disabilities, but also as a consequence of biological changes to the physical appearance of a body brought about by ageing or bodily modification, as well as potentially disturbing ways in which it was animated or made to behave by the subject during life. Such bodies might be connected with the intentional result of particular religious convictions or the unintentional consequence of cognitive disorders or other conditions. Here we can note the example of the second century AD orator Aelius Aristides who spent two years living within the confines of the sanctuary of Asclepius at Pergamum, seeking a divine cure for his many ailments. These cures, prescribed by the god, entailed a series of ‘bodily trials’, such as fasting, purges, bathing in icy lakes and arduous journeys (Aelius Aristides *Hieroi Logoi*; Petsalis-Diomidis 2010). The regular performance of these (sometimes rather peculiar) bodily actions of Aristides marked him, and importantly also his body out from the rest of the secular and religious community. He was undoubtedly not alone in human history as someone who made his body behave in ways that other members of a community may have found unsettling or perhaps even worthy of admiration. Aristides was openly favoured by the divine and his body acted accordingly, displaying this fact for all to see. We do not know the circumstances of his funeral and whether his actions had lasting significance, but his example provides a glimpse of the unusual ways in which a living body might be made to behave. It also forces us to speculate on how far reaching the consequences of this might have been once that body was no longer subject to self-control. Were Aristides’ contemporaries in awe of his divinely animated (dead) body, and was it something to be treated with particular respect because of this, or was it something from which one should keep one’s distance?

Similarly, we might extend such questions to a dead body which, perhaps troublingly, did not ‘perform’ as expected, such as the partially uncorrupted bodies of saints examined here by Devlin. The lack of expected decay witnessed in cases such as that of St Edith might be considered a sign of ‘deviant’ behaviour (going against contemporary biological expectations) but, once again, for members of early medieval society this could be viewed as a positive deviancy: a sign of holiness. It may, then, be possible to place our view of

so-called 'deviant' mortuary practices alongside what we know about apparently 'deviant' bodies (in life and death) in order to make better sense of both and to explore the presence – or indeed absence – of connections between them. What this might in fact reveal, as recent studies have begun to suggest, is that a more comprehensive embodiment of funerary archaeology, as advocated here, has wide-reaching implications. Not only are we faced with the challenge of making sense of a great variety of mortuary-related practices, even within the same community, but we must also contend with the fact that the bodies which comprised that community might also display a considerable degree of disparity (Graham 2013; Southwell-Wright 2013). These are questions that await further study.

One final word must be said about the chapters collected in this volume: they explore a range of case studies from a variety of locations and past cultural contexts. It is not our intention, however, to provide a continuous overview of attitudes towards, and manipulation of, the dead body from prehistory to the medieval period, with snapshots illustrating interesting moments or apparently 'typical' (or indeed 'atypical') mortuary behaviour from each period. Instead, we hope that this selection of case studies will point towards the importance of observing the diversity of experiences that might have occurred at different times and in certain locations in the past. In doing so we are reminded of the multiple, and often conflicting, interpretations that might be placed on archaeological (and textual) evidence and the range of enquiries that might be made of that data. If nothing else, by reading this volume we might enquire of ourselves why we do not commonly ask the same questions or use the same methodologies as our colleagues working on historically disparate material. It is our hope that the studies presented here will make it possible to hold up a critical mirror to both ourselves and our methods, as well as the discipline of body studies itself. At the same time, by revealing a view of our own bodies, this metaphorical mirror reminds us that at the heart of ancient communities and their mortuary treatment rests not only the dead but also the living body. It is the interaction between these multifaceted dynamic bodies which provide a fulcrum for the volume, with individual chapters taking their leave from it in different but, we hope, exciting and thought provoking ways. We may no longer react to queries about the dead in the same way as the crowds in fifteenth-century Rome did when they peered at and played with the remarkably preserved body of the anonymous Roman woman, but we undoubtedly have as many questions as they did and must continue to investigate new ways of prodding and poking ancient bodies into providing us with answers.

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NEITHER FISH NOR FOWL: BURIAL PRACTICES BETWEEN INHUMATION AND CREMATION

Katharina Rebay-Salisbury

Introduction

Partial cremation is a topic that sits uneasily between the ontological categories within which burials are usually discussed, and yet a wide range of practices can be described as overlapping inhumation and cremation. Two of the main reasons why such difficulties in conceptualizing partial cremation exist are the ambiguous material status of the body itself, and the more complicated temporal staging of the funerary process. The materiality of the body itself is key to understanding mortuary practices in the wider sense, as such practices are responses to the perceived need to deal with the dead body and to simultaneously address a wide range of personal and societal issues. These include mourning and grieving, expressing and negotiating identity and status and reconsidering beliefs and religious practices. The material properties of non-cremated and cremated bodies are very different, and this materiality impacts upon the way in which bodies are responded to during the funerary rituals. A funeral that includes cremation is already a complex, multi-staged ritual process (*e.g.* Williams 2008, 241). In this chapter, it is helpful to think through the stages of this process and differentiate between body treatment, deposition and post-depositional practices. As fire can be involved in each of these stages and affect the body to varying degrees, a number of quite distinct phenomena are termed ‘partial cremation’ in archaeological literature. This chapter will first address partial cremation as it concerns the physical body itself, and secondly, as it concerns practices in response to and around the body. This includes grave construction, grave goods and practices of remembrance. Examples are taken from later European prehistory and the classical periods. As is inevitable with such a time-span, the chosen examples are by necessity anecdotal in nature, and can neither provide an exhaustive overview of the topic, nor set the examples in their total social, cultural and historical context. However, in exploring some of the practices in the ‘grey zone’ between inhumation and cremation and addressing them systematically, the aim

of this chapter is to raise awareness of the variability that exists at the interface between inhumation and cremation and to highlight some of the associated interpretative challenges.¹

Inhumation and cremation

Funerary archaeology is distorted towards over-emphasising practices that leave bodies underground, principally due to preservation issues; for these burials, cremation and inhumation are often presented as a choice of one of a pair of binary oppositions. This 'assumed duality' (which Sprague 2005, 57–58 has notably critiqued) may hold true when we excavate human remains and find them either burned or not, but in re-constructing the sequence of actions that led to their deposition it becomes clear that they are indeed very variable.

Inhumation refers to a depositional practice, the act of placing an un-cremated body in the ground. In its simplest form, inhumation is the result of a single action, although some time might have passed between death and the interment, in which the body may be stored, displayed or otherwise prepared. Practices such as mummification aim at preserving the body at that stage (*e.g.* Aufderheide 2003, 43). Until the burial, the body generally remains in an unaltered state, with the most visible aspects of decay occurring in the ground. The funerary rites may be completed by putting the body into the ground, but alternatively, the grave can be a temporary place for the body before the bones are recovered for secondary treatment (*e.g.* Kuijt 1996; Larsson 2003). Even the simplest forms of cremation burials, however, require the burning of the body as a prior treatment before the deposition. This includes a number of additional actions, such as the construction of the pyre and the cremation itself, and in many cases a subsequent recovery of the remains and the moving, storing and final burial in a designated container or in the ground. Substantial amounts of time can pass between these individual steps.

The temporal choreography of the two forms of burial is hard to parallelise, but may involve elaboration of particular stages in the sequence of actions taken by the community to bury the bodies. When reconstructing this sequence, it is crucial to take into consideration what happens to the material bodies themselves. The transformation of the body in the case of an inhumation takes place in the ground, hidden from the eyes of viewers, and takes time – from a few months to several years (Sprenger 1999). The transformation of the body in the case of cremation, in contrast, may be amongst the most crucial elements of the funeral. It is a relatively quick and public process (Sørensen and Bille 2008) and certainly involves all of the senses (Williams 2004). Furthermore, cremation lets the mourning community take an active role in the transformation of the body. In both cases, further treatment of the remains may follow.

1 My chronological focus on prehistory and the classical world reflects my research experience and excludes later examples to make the material manageable. This does not mean, however, that such examples did not exist. In drawing attention to the wide range of variability I hope that the archaeological record of later periods will similarly be scrutinised for practices between inhumation and cremation.

The dead body poses conceptual problems – it is no more a person, but it is also not a thing (cf. Kristeva 1982). Similarly, the time of social death rarely coincides with biological death, which is in itself hard to define (Appel 2005; Wijdicks 2002). In response to the loss of a community member, mortuary rituals and funerary practices are a formal way to grieve and work through these uncertainties, gradually restoring the normal social order. As such, they are dominated by two elements: the embodied practice of customs and traditions, and the associated beliefs, which, without having to be too formalised,² provide a rationale to explain those customs and traditions. The beliefs associated with inhumations or cremations vary widely and there is no ‘one fits all’ explanation for choosing either rite (Rebay-Salisbury 2012). The rationale that underpins inhumation and cremation may be contradictory, but may equally be complementary. Partial cremations are fascinating, because they are a bit of both; interpretations need to bridge the temporal dissonance as well as contradictory associated beliefs.

What is a partial cremation?

Partial cremation of the body means a part of the body remains un-burnt while another part becomes cremated. As obvious as this definition sounds, partial cremation is the common end result of a variety of different practices at different stages during the funeral. Related to the treatment of the body are (1) the incomplete cremation of the whole individual, and (2) the separation of body parts and their differential treatment. Furthermore, (3) fire may be used in a variety of ways during the deposition of an un-burnt body and (4) may be used to cremate parts of de-fleshed skeletal bodies in connection with secondary mortuary rites. I will describe each case in more detail before moving on to discuss the mutual ‘borrowing’ of single components between inhumation and cremation.

Incomplete cremation of the whole body

In forensic science, partial cremation is defined in terms of the degree of thermal alteration by amounts of surviving tissue – partial cremation is ‘where soft tissues remain’ (Symes *et al.* 2008, 25). Today, partial cremation occurs in connection with accidents such as house fires or as an attempt to cover up crimes (Schmidt and Symes 2008). Certainly such cases existed in prehistoric and historical periods as well, and may be evidenced by findings in settlement contexts. Charred human remains from late Neolithic earthworks in southern Germany, for instance, testify to catastrophes and war-like events (Wahl 1999; Wahl 2008, 146). In the context of regular mortuary practice, however, partially burnt bodies require further interpretation.

Among the over 1600 inhumations of the early Bronze Age cemetery of Franzhausen II, Austria, for instance, five partially cremated individuals were found (Reiter 2008). They

2 To paraphrase Hertz, whose original statement was: ‘Ideas relating to the fate of the soul are in their very nature vague and indefinite; we should not try to make them too clear-cut’ (Hertz 1960 [1908], 34).

were all placed in a crouched position on their left side in north-south oriented grave pits, which would be typical for male inhumations in this period of rigid gender marking through body position (cf. Primas 2008, 48–56). There was nothing extraordinary about the associated grave goods, which included pottery and occasional dress elements such as bone pins and bronze rings, but interestingly, the careful anthropological analysis has identified three skeletons as female and only one as male (Reiter 2008, 201). The bodies were exposed to low temperatures (300–550°C)³ compared with those that could be reached by prehistoric pyres, and the traces of fire were primarily documented on the right side of the body, which would be the top side if it was lying on the left, and on body parts covered by little flesh, such as the cranium and the extremities. It could not be clarified whether the bodies were exposed to fire on a pyre and subsequently moved, or if they were burnt in situ; obvious traces of fire were, however, absent from the grave pits. These burials do not fall into one of the obvious transition periods from inhumation to cremation or *vice versa*, but the unusual way in which they are socially categorised might be an explanation for the unusual treatment of their bodies.

Although cremation was practiced to some extent in most prehistoric periods, it only became the norm in most of Europe during the middle/late Bronze Age transition (Harris *et al.* 2013; Sørensen and Rebay 2008a, b; Sørensen and Rebay-Salisbury in prep.). At that point, cremation was carried out with astonishing technological perfection and efficiency, which suggests that the technology of cremation was transmitted in tandem with the trend towards this burial rite. Nevertheless, cremation on a pyre is a highly unpredictable process. If an individual was burnt on a funerary pyre, various degrees of oxidation may be observed on one body. It seems that pre-Roman Iron Age cremations in Germany were more often incompletely burnt than those of the Imperial Roman period (Wahl 2008, 153), but varying degrees of oxidation have also been observed in Romano-British burials. McKinley explains these findings by varying body mass of the cremated individuals, or insulation through objects placed around the body such as cushions or boots (2008, 176–178). The Romano-British cemeteries of the town of Baldock, Hertfordshire, have revealed two partial cremations: here, the axial skeletons of an adult male and an adult female have remained largely un-burnt, whereas skeletal elements with little soft tissue coverage were burnt white. The bodies were subsequently buried (McKinley 2008, 180). McKinley explains these variations in terms of unfavourable cremation conditions, such as sudden wind and rain, which interrupted the ceremony and changed its usual course of actions, or insufficient supply of wood (*ibid.*, 180–181).

Another explanation is that the body was not fixed strongly enough on the pyre to prevent the body moving and sliding off. In various cases, limbs like one arm or one leg stuck out of the pyre and became only partially burnt. This happened, for instance, at the middle Bronze Age cemetery of Pitten, Austria. The right *humerus* and *ulna* of the individual found in Grave 155 were only partially burnt and showed no sign of shrinkage associated with high temperatures (Teschler-Nicola 1985, 235). Similarly, amongst the urn burials from

3 Temperatures of around 800° C are routinely reached for prehistoric cremations. Different systems are used to classify the degree of burning based on discolouration and change of texture of the bones (see *e.g.* Wahl 2008, 149; Schmidt and Symes 2008, 2).

Cottbus Alvensleben-Kaserne, Germany (Gramsch 2007), were two cremations, where parts of the body did not reach the usual temperatures in relation to other cremations at the same site; this affected the lower extremities of skeletons W130 and 50a (Großkopf 2004, 156). Despite these abnormalities, the cremated remains of the individuals were not treated any differently and were buried in the usual manner. Even in some cemeteries of the Imperial Roman period in Germany (*e.g.* Loitsche and Zethlingen) the analysis of bones has shown that organic matter has probably survived on the bones, because the cremation temperatures were too low or the duration of exposure to fire was not long enough. Nevertheless, these only partially cremated bones were collected along with the fully cremated ones (Becker *et al.* 2005, 138, 141). Pliny the Elder reports a number of instances in which a person who was laid out for burial came to life again (Pliny, *The Natural History* 7.53); particularly dramatic was the case of the ex-consul Aviola, who could not be saved because the flames were too violent and he was therefore burnt alive (Bostock and Riley 1855). Caligula's funeral was carried out in such a haste after he was murdered that he was 'half-burnt on an emergency pyre' (Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum*, Caligula 59, after Noy 2000, 189); he was, however, exhumed, cremated and buried again later. Tales such as this illustrate that alive or not, bodies did move during the cremation and occasionally slid off the funerary pyre – the course of a funerary fire is not always entirely predictable. Muscle contraction in extreme heat is forensically well documented (*e.g.* Schmidt and Symes 2008). The social response to these incidents, based on the examples noted above, seems to be to gloss over and proceed as normal or to find pragmatic solutions to the disposal of the remains.

Partial burning of bodies may also occur in the context of burying the remains of individuals who suffered a deviant death, for instance by sacrifice or execution. Several such individuals were recently excavated in Leonding, Austria (Marschler *et al.* in press; Pertwieser 2000/2001), in what most likely represents an Iron Age sacrifice shaft containing a minimum of 11 individuals (Figure 2.1). The individuals were not buried in the usual way, although males, females and children were amongst them. The bones of one individual in particular, Individual G, showed traces of burning above the right eye, whereas another individual was slightly affected by fire at the lower arm. Both body regions are covered with little tissue and the greyish-white to blackish-brown discolouration of the bones might be connected to their taphonomic location; they were found amongst charred wood. The excavator suggested that the individuals might have been fixed to a stake and set on fire in the course of repeated sacrifices to the Celtic god Taranis (Pertwieser 2000/2001, 366). Although this particular interpretation has been challenged as too narrow (Leskovar and Traxler 2008; Marschler *et al.* in press), human sacrifice remains a recurrent phenomenon in prehistoric periods (Green 2001; Rind 1996).

Partially cremated bones may be evidence of cooking, roasting, smoking, boiling or steaming of the corpse in the course of body treatment after death (Weiss-Krejci 2005, 71). Interpreting prehistoric funerals from Scandinavia as human sacrifices to the deities, Oestigaard (2000) suggests differentiating the ways in which the body may be prepared. He believes that during funerary rituals, bodies are prepared for the gods in specific ways 'to become edible meals for the deities' (*ibid.*, 41), and as such they may be sacrificed raw,

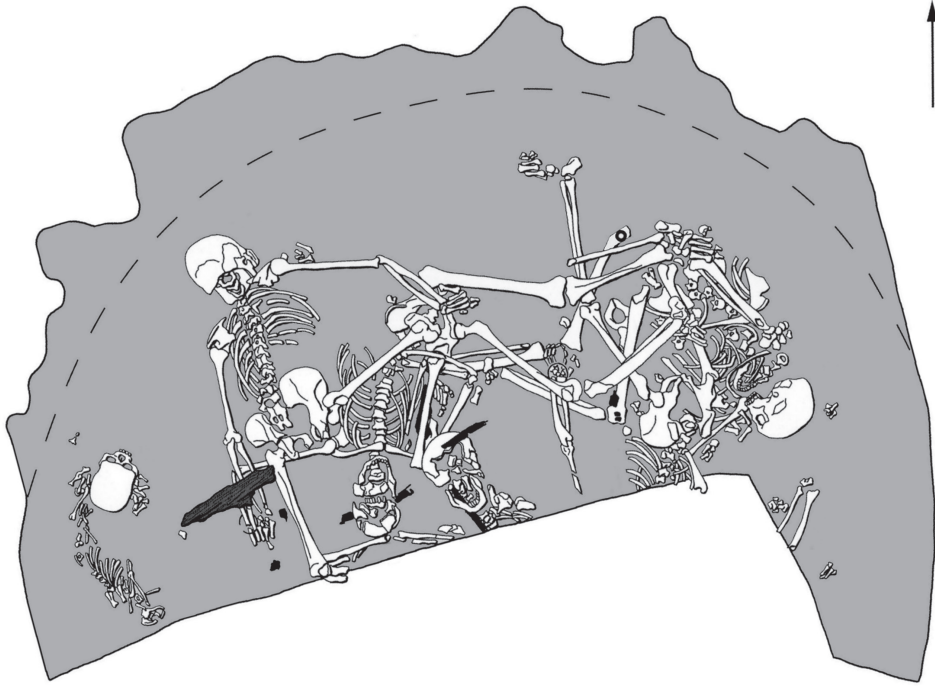


Figure 2.1. Partially cremated individuals in an Iron Age sacrifice shaft from Leonding, Austria (Leskovar and Traxler 2008, 151; reproduced by kind permission from Jutta Leskovar, Oberösterreichisches Landesmuseum).

cooked or burnt. His evidence takes the form of traces of bones burned at low temperatures as well as the fact that there is often more than one urn in graves – he interprets those as containing the intentionally removed flesh or as cooking pots for the flesh. In this reading, the consumption of bodies or body parts is not attributed to human agents, but cannibalism can also be part of funerary practices, and has been reported from Australia, North and South America as well as India. According to the substantial body of literature that discusses endocannibalism (e.g. Arens 1979; Binford 1963; Conklin 2001; Goldman 1999; Hertz 1960 [1907], 44; Parry 1982), its motives vary widely according to circumstances and social beliefs. Conklin, for instance, argues that cannibalism amongst the Amazonian Wari' is an act of socially expressed compassion, and aimed to help family and friends to come to terms with their loss more easily and more quickly by causing the body of the deceased 'to disappear' through consumption (2001, 433). Endocannibalistic practices may be confined to the human flesh, but also may extend to consuming cremated bones. Amongst the Amazonian Yanomami, who cremate their dead, bones are carefully picked up after cremation, ground and pounded into small fragments. They are packed in containers and distributed in the wider community. In a final funerary feast, often held quite some time

after death, the ashes are eaten by members of the community the deceased belonged to, but also by the communities the deceased had relations with (Woznicki 1998).

Funerary cannibalism, as a somewhat alien concept to most Europeans, has not been picked up widely as an interpretative framework in later European prehistory; notable exceptions, albeit without the suggestion of partial cremation, are the Neolithic sites of Fontbrégoua, France (Villa *et al.* 1986), and Herxheim, Germany (Boulestin *et al.* 2009). That cannibalism was a way of dealing with dead bodies in both Neanderthal and modern human societies in the Palaeolithic seems easier to come to terms with (*e.g.* Fernandez-Jalvo *et al.* 1996; Taylor 2002, 56–84). The main problem lies in the difficulty of recognising and demonstrating cannibalism (*e.g.* White 2003): the primary evidence is human bone modifications related to butchery processes and their similarity to the patterns observed on animal bones (which would be remarkably hard to detect for cremated bones). Distinguishing cannibalism from defleshing in the course of specific funerary practices is not possible through osteological observations.

Separation of body parts and their differential treatment

The partition of the body in the fleshed state for differential treatment is a concept that aroused interest quite early in the anthropological literature. ‘Partial burning’ can be found along with cremation as a category to classify North American burial customs as early as 1881 (Yarrow 1881, 92–93). The Pit River Indians ‘placed the body in the ground in a standing position with the shoulders nearly level with the ground, and cut off the head. After covering up the decapitated body, a bundle of faggots was then laid on the grave on which the head was rested. The pile was fired and the head consumed to ashes’ (James 1928, 222; Yarrow 1881, 151). This type of partial cremation is in fact characteristic of the mortuary practices in many societies, and is attested in North America, Panama, Melanesia and Australia. Cremation of particular body parts often centres on the head, for which a differential treatment is carried out (Wahl and Wahl 1983, 518), but may also tackle different body parts for various reasons. On Samoa, for instance, only the ‘sick’ body part was severed from the body and burnt, the rest was buried (Mackensen 1923; Wahl and Wahl 1984, 446). Financial concerns may lie at the heart of the matter if a token cremation is carried out instead of an expensive cremation for the whole body (Wahl and Wahl 1984, 446); here, a body part can symbolically represent a whole body.

If cremation of parts of the body is so often attested in the anthropological literature, why is it so difficult to find in archaeological contexts? Early antiquarians certainly thought about this possibility in a very graphic way, as a drawing from 1695 illustrates (Figure 2.2). One of the obvious reasons is that un-burnt and cremated body parts do not have to be deposited together. Sufficient preservation provided, missing body parts may be quite easily identified in inhumation graves, but cremation graves rarely contain all the bones of an individual. Cremated remains are often deposited in locations other than where they are burnt; it is possible that parts of the body remain in the context of the funerary pyre



Figure 2.2. A graphic illustration of cremation, dating to 1698 (D. S. Büttner 1698, 'Beschreibung des Leichenbrandes', after Stemmermann 1934, plate 16, fig. 22).

(Arcini 2005; Kaliff 2005) or become deposited in distinct archaeological features (Bowman 1991). The deposition of significant parts of the body is often enough for a burial and does not raise further suspicions (Brück 2009; Rebay-Salisbury 2010, 65). It is notoriously difficult to identify missing body parts in assemblages of cremated bones or even establish a reliable minimum number of individuals (Appleby pers. comm.). So even if body parts are missing from an inhumation or cremation burial, partial cremation is hardly more than a speculative conclusion (Grünberg 2000, 44–46).

The Mesolithic (*c.* 7700 BC) Große Ofnet cave burials near Holheim, Germany (Probst 1991, 184, 187; Schmidt 1913), can be considered one of those rare cases where cremated and un-burnt body parts were deposited next to each other. Thirty-three skulls have been found arranged in ochre-lined pits and adorned with jewellery made of animal teeth and snail shells. The original reports identified 4 men, 9 women and 20 children, although recent analysis may suggest different figures (Jochim 2008, 218). Many of them had bludgeon wounds with no traces of healing (Frayer 1997; Orschiedt 2002). Cutmarks on the vertebrae show that they were cut off the fleshed body, but of course it is not certain if this was the cause of death or part of a funerary treatment. Some evidence points to the skulls having been added in a series of instances rather than in a single, catastrophic event (Meyer-Orlac 1982, 162). This is not the only instance of skull depositions of this period in southern Germany and western France, but it is the only one with evidence of the cremation of the rest of the bodies. Between the two features that contained the skulls a third pit was discovered, which contained charcoal and charred bone fragments, 'which may

represent the postcranial skeletons' (Jochim 2008, 217–218). Unfortunately it cannot be proven beyond doubt that the cremated bones and skulls belonged to the same individuals.

Another one of the rare cases for which partial cremation has been suspected is Grave 3 from Henfenfeld near Nürnberg, Germany. The skeletons of two inhumed individuals dating to the late Bronze Age were found on top of each other; the hands and feet were missing. In addition, the skulls of both individuals were split, with one half of each absent. Cremated remains were found around the knees of the individuals, but in the absence of osteological data it is unclear if the cremated remains belong to a third individual or are the cremated missing bones (Hörmann 1926; Wiesner 2009, 469, fig. 205). The same cemetery contained a collection of disarticulated (adult) human bones in a grave pit too small for a full inhumation. Grave 11 was interpreted in 1926 as a 'bone package' that resulted from a multiphase burial, in which bodies were first left to decompose and then either cremated or deposited (Hörmann 1926, after Wiesner 2009, 469–470).

Rather surprising places to find the type of partial cremation where bodies are severed are Latin texts. Cicero, Festus and Varro mention the rite of *os resectum* (cut bone), in which a small part of the corpse was cut off from the body to be treated separately (Graham 2009; 2011). The purpose of this practice is not very clear (Hope 2007, 108; Toynbee 1971, 49), and interpretations range from it being a remainder of an earlier custom of inhumation, helping to legitimise cremation by providing an interment in earth, which was believed to be necessary to create a proper resting place for the soul, to being a part of the funerary ritual of purification and remembrance to ensure the spiritual well-being of both the community of the dead and that of the living (Graham 2009). Perhaps just a joint from a finger, the *os resectum* is not particularly conspicuous in the archaeological record. Nevertheless, the finds of 300 small inscribed vessels containing bone fragments from San Cesareo on the Via Appia (Graham 2009, 55–57) and the recent discovery of a vessel underneath the altar dedicated to M. Nonius Balbus at Herculaneum, which very likely contains a phalanx from one of his fingers (Graham 2009, 57–67; Pappalardo 1997), make it clear that assuming that Roman funerary rites were much like our own might make us miss important evidence.

The use of fire in connection with inhumation burials

Use of fire in connection with inhumation burials has long been suspected as one of the roots of cremation, and indeed, traces of fire can often be observed within burial grounds even when cremation is not practiced as such. The use of fire may not leave any traces on the human bones; if it does, it is sometimes also referred to as 'skeletal charring' (Weitzel and McKenzie 2008). Early instances of the use of fire in connection with inhumation burials are easy to find in the enormous variability of Mesolithic burials. The two cemeteries of Skateholm, Sweden, famous for their human and dog burials and dating to c. 5250–4900 cal. BC, had three cremation burials amongst nearly 90 inhumations (Larsson 1990). During the process of filling the graves, a number of activities took place, such as feasting

and disposal of leftovers; tools and ornaments were also thrown into the grave. Larsson observed that the 'ritual involved fire, without this being an actual cremation' (*ibid.*, 158). The grave of an old woman could be shown to have been covered by a wooden structure that had been burnt down prior to the refilling of the grave (Larsson 1984, 126; Larsson 1993, 47). Other examples attest that a fire was lit after filling the grave pit. A charcoal layer over the Mesolithic grave of a two- to three-year-old child who was buried in a sitting position under a rock shelter from Elsbethen, Austria, suggests such a practice (Svoboda 2008, 235).

Fire in connection to mortuary practices, but without the aim of total cremation of the body, has been demonstrated from the hunter-gatherer-fisher cemetery of Khuzhir-Nuge XIV in Siberia, dating to approximately 2700 to 2000 BC. 79 graves were excavated recently, of which 54 showed traces of burning; both the grave constructions (pits and stone cairns) and 20 of the bodies were affected (Weitzel and McKenzie 2008, 186). Fire was used differentially and not on all individuals, but neither gender nor age patterns could be detected. It was clear that fire exposure affected the upper parts of the bodies more than the lower, with the skull and right side being more often exposed to fire than the rest of the body (*ibid.*, 194). Charred bones were found in articulation rather than disarticulated (*ibid.*, 195). In this cemetery, exposure of bodies in the graves and grave constructions to fire was part of the mortuary or remembrance ritual for a significant proportion of the people. The bodies were not completely transformed through fire, nor were they moved from the places of inhumation. Other hunters and fishers in northern Eurasia, western Siberia and southern Ural used fires at mortuary ceremonies as well as partial and total cremations (Häusler 1962, 1151).

In situ burning of inhumed individuals is also attested from later periods, for instance the Early Iron Age tumuli in Albania, which usually contained a large number of inhumation burials and a few cremations. In the tumulus of Kamenica, for example, three cremations had taken place on the spot, leaving traces of baked clay, while others were cremated elsewhere and brought to the tumulus after cremation (Bejko *et al.* 2010). At Lofkënd, Albania, two burials of children and a juvenile seem to have been interred in the graves before a fire was lit on top. The individuals were only partially cremated, but interestingly, patches of fire-affected clay over their bones indicate that clay was thrown onto the burning material (Papadopoulos, Bejko, and Morris 2007, 125–126), perhaps to extinguish the fire.

Wooden constructions and houses built over graves that were burnt down in the course of funerary ceremonies are not uncommon in prehistory, but the funerary houses of the Bronze Age in the northern German Lüneburg area are probably among the most elaborate examples. The twelve houses that have been found so far differ significantly from regular dwellings and are rectangular, usually east-west oriented, open buildings of considerably size (4.5–6.5 m by 3–5.2 m). They were probably designed to be burnt down with the enclosed bodies and be subsequently covered with a mound. The house from Baven, Germany, for instance, contained the inhumation of a male with a short sword, a dagger and a pin as well as a number of flints in the centre of the structure under thick layers of ashes (Piesker 1934). At Grünhof-Tesperhude, Germany, the bodies of a female and a child were placed

in tree coffins well integrated into the stone plastering of the house and cremated whilst the house was burnt down (Busch 1996; Laux 1971). These houses, intercutting funerary and domestic spheres, raise interesting questions about the relationship of the dead and the living as well as residence and resting place. It is probably no coincidence that most of these structures date to a time when cremation was introduced to the Lüneburg area and associated ideologies were in the process of being formulated.

Partial cremation of bodies as secondary burial practices

Hertz was one of the first to extensively discuss cremation as part of secondary burial practices (Hertz 1960 [1907], 29–53). He focussed on analysing and interpreting the intermediate period between biological death and a final ceremony that concludes all funeral rituals. In this intermediate period, the body may be treated in a variety of ways for preservation or to control and monitor decomposition. Simple storage, exposure, temporary inhumation, mummification or excarnation are a few of the possibilities one might think of (Wahl and Wahl 1984; Williams 2008). The intermediate period is ended by a final ceremony, which aims at giving burial to the deceased, ensuring peace for the soul and freeing the living from obligations of mourning (Hertz 1960 [1907], 53). In Bali, such a secondary cremation is organised only for rich people, while others receive a simple burial. As such, the cremation includes multiple individuals, because ‘the graves of commoners are dug up and earth is raked for pieces of bone’ (Metcalf and Huntington 1991, 101–102). These bones are roughly collected in the correct relationship to each other, packed in bundles and cremated before they are thrown into the sea. Metcalf and Huntington remark upon the fact that recovering complete bodies was not required, and a few bones may suffice – another instance of partial cremation.

This final ceremony may include the deliberate cremation of the whole or parts of bodies, but a range of practices can eventually result in fire-affected bones, if the secondary burial involves fire. Fire could have, for instance, been applied in order to clean bones of remaining soft tissue (Weiss-Krejci 2005, 52) or might occur accidentally whilst corpses were dehydrated by fire for mummification (*ibid.*, 47, 51, citing Leisner and Leisner 1943, 546–547; Lethbridge 1950, 36; Sempowski 1994, 142–144). To be able to address the question of whether burnt bones are the result of a primary or secondary cremation, it is vital to ascertain whether bones were burnt in-flesh, de-fleshed (‘green’) or dry. Fracture patterns on the bones can provide the clues: experimental studies have shown that deep cracks, fissures, longitudinal splitting, curved fractures and warping are characteristically observed when whole bodies are burnt in flesh, while cracking, checking, fissures and splits are shallower and curved fractures and warping are absent when cremating dry bones (Whyte 2001, 439). The burning of fresh, but de-fleshed bone is more difficult to identify as the fracture patterns lie somewhere in between (Thurman and Willmore 1981). Bones do not even have to be totally exposed to be affected by post-depositional fires. Experimental studies (Bennett 1999) have demonstrated that shallowly buried bones (*i.e.* 2 to 10 cm underneath

the surface) can be altered through the heat of a surface fire alone. They carbonise and calcinate according to the temperatures reached, and change their colour characteristically evenly across all surfaces. Fracturing and warping of the bones are negligible. Variability may be the result of different depth and characteristics of the sediments the bones are embedded in, as well as intensity and duration of the source of heat.

Cremation of de-fleshed bones and skeletal bodies after decomposition can also occur unrelated to a final ceremony in Hertz's terms, that is when 'old' bones are encountered in the burial space when digging new graves. Secondary burning of defleshed human bones has recently been well documented from late Mesolithic–early Neolithic (c. 7500 to 5900 cal. BC) communities of the Danube Gorges, Serbia (Borić, Raičević and Stefanović 2009). The burial site of Vlasac at the Danube shore was revisited continuously over a long time span, and bodies were usually interred as extended inhumations, although sometimes in semi-flexed and seated positions (*ibid.*, 250). Frequent intercutting of graves, deliberate or not, resulted in encountering old human bones. These were cremated in situ before new bodies were added. That bones were burnt in a dry state could be demonstrated by the characteristic patterns of longitudinal cracks and fractures. In total, 56 contexts with burnt human remains were documented from recent excavations at Vlasac (*ibid.*, 252). The burning of skeletal remains targeted the head and torso more often than the lower limbs, and this resulted in partial cremations. In some cases, burnt and un-burnt parts of bones could even be fitted together again (Figure 2.3). Sex, age or other characteristics did not seem to be a factor in choosing which individuals to treat by this secondary mortuary practice. Of course issues of memory and maintenance of traditions can play into the re-use of burial space, but it seems more likely, as the authors suggest, that the practice is

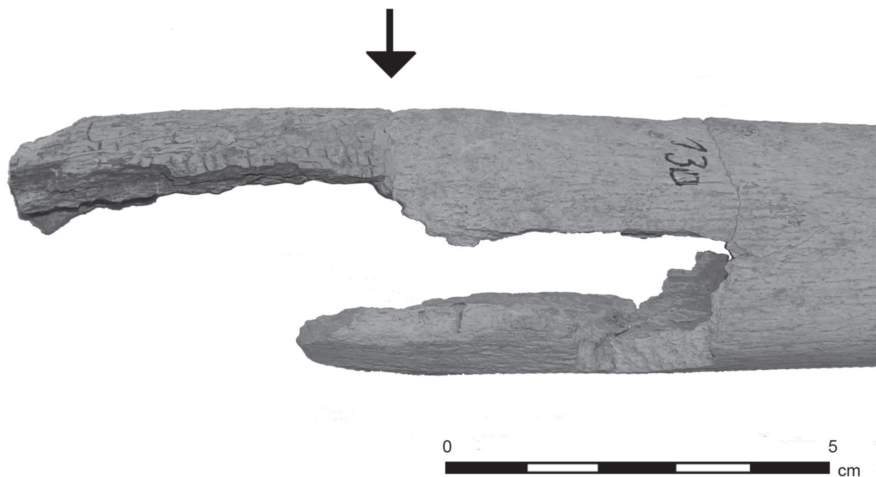


Figure 2.3. Unburnt and burnt fragments of the same tibia, refitted from burial 130 and 115 at Vlasac, Serbia (Borić, Raičević and Stefanović 2009, 251, photo reproduced by kind permission from Dušan Borić, Cardiff University).

connected to the placing of new bodies in old burial grounds, which had to be purified and cleansed through fire before a new body was added. The cremated bones, however, were left in situ and not removed from the freshly cut graves. A deliberate continuation of mortuary traditions may be connected to the old bones, but they still might have been seen as powerful and dangerous. To solve this tension, disarticulation and burning of old bones may be targeted at restricting the remaining powers of the defleshed (*ibid.*, 273).

Partial burning of human bodies and bones was also practiced widely in Neolithic and Copper Age contexts on the Iberian Peninsula between the late fifth and second millennium BC (Weiss-Krejci 2005). While some evidence points to the cremation of fresh bodies soon after death, the majority of cases can be connected to secondary burial rites such as the burning of decomposing bodies or dry bones (*ibid.*, 44). Partially cremated human bones have been found in natural caves and rock shelters, dolmen graves and *tholoi*, and often the surrounding structures in addition to the bones show traces of fire. In many of these funerary contexts more than one individual had been deposited. The traces of fire on the bones are far from uniform and seem to have affected bones at all stages of decomposition and disarticulation. This can be explained by the observation that complex sequences of depositions were often closed through a ritual that involved fire. Cueva Maturra, for instance, a cave that contained at least four articulated individuals was sealed after a fire was set (*ibid.*, 43). The practice of secondary cremation, or cremation of bodies after decomposition, seems atypical for the large cremation cemeteries of the Bronze and Iron Ages of central Europe (Rebay-Salisbury 2010), despite the fact that a wide range of post-depositional practices are attested (Sørensen and Rebay-Salisbury in prep.).

‘Borrowing’ between inhumation and cremation

In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss the transferral of specific elements of inhumation to cremation practices. This does not address alterations of the physical body (discussed above), but structures built and objects placed around the body. In a sense, these elements of funerary practice can also be interpreted as responses to the material body, relating to its size and shape and attending to its perceived needs. The transferral of elements from inhumation to cremation graves at the middle to late Bronze Age transition in Europe has recently been investigated in detail by Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and the author of this chapter.

A shared burial space in which both inhumations and cremations take place is an obvious venue for overlapping practices. In middle Bronze Age Europe, many such cemeteries existed, for which the term ‘bi-ritual’ has been coined (*e.g.* Blischke 2002; Bukowski 1997; Dušek 1969; Hampel, Kerchler and Benkovsky-Pivovarová 1981; Polla 1960). The cemeteries suggest a chronological development from inhumation to cremation, but while this is true overall, individual graves might not fit the general trajectory. Both inhumation and cremation may have been used side by side for a considerable time, and choices were probably made on the basis of individual characteristics, taking age, gender

and status into consideration. The deposition of un-cremated and cremated individuals in one grave, however, is a much rarer phenomenon than shared cemetery space. In many cases, inhumations and cremations were buried in chronological succession rather than deposited in a single event. An exception might be the Egtved Girl from Denmark, dating to c. 1390–1370 BC and famous for wearing a short string skirt (Broholm and Hald 1940). She was buried in an oak coffin underneath a burial mound; at her feet, the cremated remains of a five- to six-year-old child were found. Similarly, amongst the individuals buried in barrow 17 of Deutsch-Evern, Germany, was a burial with a rich set of female ornaments. A cremated child was buried at shoulder height, wrapped in a cloth that was probably part of the woman's upper dress and was fastened with a fibula (Körner 1959; Laux 1971, 213). The deposition of cremated children together with inhumed adults, almost as a grave good, occurs occasionally in early Bronze Age Únětice contexts (Wahl 1982, 39). To bury an un-cremated infant or child with a cremated adult seems to be much more common in the late Bronze Age of southern central Europe (Wiesner 2009, 464–469, 485–488). Still, burials of un-cremated and cremated bodies together remain rare events. Wiesner (2009) cites only 19 graves for which this could be suggested (of 11,713 known burials of the late Bronze Age in this region; *ibid.*, 28). The deposition of a burnt and an un-burnt body in a single event may suggest that one body was cremated earlier and kept until both were interred, and while it is tempting to suggest an emotional or kinship tie between the buried individuals, it might be a matter of simplicity to organise only one grave for two persons.

Despite the fact that through cremation the body loses certain elements of its material qualities and is transformed to a very different substance (Sørensen and Rebay 2008a), graves of the middle to late Bronze Age transition may still be built for the same space an inhumed body would need. The extent of the body remains imagined when depositing the cremated remains. This phenomenon is widespread and has been documented in the Nordic Bronze Age (Aner and Kersten 1981), where full sized oak coffins remained in use for cremations, and in central Europe, where stone linings and grave pits define the extent of the space for a body; the cremated remains are scattered in this designated space (Kimmig 1940; Wagner 1943). A large number of such graves have recently been excavated at the cemetery of Zuchering, Germany, dating to the thirteenth to eighth century BC (Schütz 2007; see Figure 2.4). Of the 529 excavated graves, 102 were scattered cremations, most of which had a clearly distinguishable, rectangular, body-sized centre in which the cremation and grave goods were placed. This centre must have been confined by a wooden coffin or box. Pyre debris was deposited within the grave cut, but primarily outside this central structure. The space of the grave was initially measured against the space a living body would need, and only gradually readjusted to fit the material properties of cremated remains.

In the early Iron Age, when the focus shifted once again towards display around the body, and inhumation was re-introduced in many areas of central Europe, cremation graves underwent a reverse modification. Individuals of especially high status were often deposited in wooden chambers with ostentatious grave goods and furnishings. These graves, for instance the well-known grave from Verucchio, Italy (Gentili 2003), or Hochdorf, Germany (Biel 1981; Biel 1985), were once again adjusted to the size of the fleshed body.

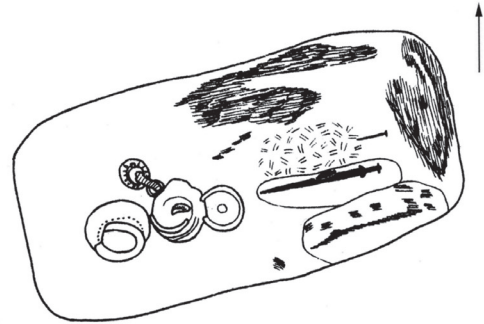


Figure 2.4. Cremation treated similarly to an un-cremated body in Grave 352 from Zuchering, Germany (photo reproduced by kind permission from Cornelia Schütz, Bayerisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, Ingoldstadt, plan after Schütz 2007, fig. 46.2).

Regardless of whether the actual body was inhumed or cremated, the construction of space around the burial became radically different: these graves mimic domestic spaces and include furniture as well as food, drink and other useful things. As grave space was reinterpreted and modified, this development had repercussions for the less well-off.

The 're-imagined body' after cremation has further needs than just space. Amongst these are wrapping and clothing as well as food and drink. Evidence for clothing the body comes from a Bronze Age grave from Hvidegård, Denmark (Herbst 1848), where a scattered cremation was laid out like an inhumation and dressed in textiles; a sword was even placed next to the body. Bronze dress elements were placed to match the correct body parts in the scattered cremations of Pitten, Austria (Sørensen and Rebay 2008b, 168), or Zuchering, Germany (Schütz 2007). Even urns are occasionally clothed like persons; they were wrapped in textiles, which were sometimes fastened with a pin at the 'shoulder' (Kaiser and Puttkammer 2007, 77). This phenomenon is also known from Etruria (Tuck 1994, 627). 'Face-urns' from the northern European late Bronze and Iron Ages (Kneisel 2012; La Baume 1950) and Etruscan 'canopic' urns, which were named after, but are unrelated to Egyptian jars for the mummified viscera of the deceased, embody the same idea of creating a new frame for a body whose boundaries have been broken by cremation. The urns from Chiusi, Italy, in particular, mimic anthropomorphic appearance in great detail, to the extent that they were given detailed facial features, movable arms or were placed on terracotta seats (Astier 2005; Gempeler 1974). They seem to be, however, no portrait in the sense that they capture personal traits of individuals. This is important if we consider Sørensen and Bille's (2008, 263–264) notion of the presence of absence, the desire to presence what is actually absent through a range of practices. It raises the question of what it is that is remembered and longed for, perhaps not the 'sensuous immediacy and a connection with the dead' (*ibid.*, 264) but a more abstract idea of the deceased's role in society.

Food and drink, or animal bones and ceramic vessels respectively, are ubiquitous in

inhumation as well as cremation graves of the Bronze and Iron Ages. Again, the specific placing of the objects may provide clues in how far the cremated body was likened to and understood in a similar way as the fleshed body. In the cemetery of Streda nad Bodrogom, Czech Republic (Polla 1960), for instance, inhumation grave 35 and cremation grave 24 were deposited with identical sets of pottery, consisting of a jug placed inside the bowl and a small cup. Both sets of pottery were placed at the 'feet' (*ibid.*, 311, 314, 353; Sørensen and Rebay-Salisbury 2008, 56). These examples are just a few to illustrate that a range of funerary practices can be carried out interchangeably for inhumations and cremations. They are all, in one way or another, responses to the materiality of the body, but this materiality may refer to the past body rather than the state of the human remains at the time of burial.

Interpretation and conclusion

'Partial cremation' covers a huge variety of practices and is therefore hard to interpret as a specific phenomenon. If we assume that the practice of inhuming and cremating bodies is a means to an end and connected to particular ideas and beliefs, then partial cremation and burial practices between cremation and inhumation are problematic. As burial rites, both cremation and inhumation are concerned with transitions from one state to another (van Gennep 1960 [1909]) and the transformation of the body itself plays a key role as a metaphor of transition. In many of the examples above it became apparent that fire was not only considered a powerful agent of transformation, but had been attributed meaning and power beyond that (Gheorghiu and Nash 2007). It can transform bodies, places, and people, it can purify and heal. Fire is 'both destructive yet also constructive of a potent element in remembrance' (Sørensen and Bille 2008, 265).

People respond to the material body in various ways during funeral rites, but it may be the body as it is remembered whilst alive and not the new physical reality after cremation that is focussed on whilst handling the remains. The temporality and timing of cremation and inhumation differs significantly, and whilst this dissonance can be problematic, partial cremation may be a way to bridge different ideas such as provisional and final, or 'primary' and 'secondary', burial rites (Hertz 1960 [1907]). It is not surprising that we find practices overlapping cremation and inhumation at points in the past when burial rites changed; this may suggest that beliefs and ideas about the body and what happens after death were in transformation and in the process of becoming formulated. Doing a bit of both, incorporating new ideas in old practices, may be a way to ensure things are done 'properly' in any case. On the other hand, we have seen examples in which partial cremation is not a sign of careful and respectful treatment, but indicative of no further concern with the material body: this may be to emphasise the immaterial aspects of a person that are often imagined to live on beyond death, or, alternatively, to add a further element of destruction. In any case, however, funerary practices address the person in a variety of ways through the medium of the material body.

Interpretations of the partitioning of bodies must include ideas of fragmentation (e.g. Brück 2006; Chapman 2000; Chapman and Gaydarska 2007; Fowler 2008; Rebay-Salisbury, Sørensen and Hughes 2010). In a sense, the body becomes multiplied through fragmentation, and the differential treatment of body parts increases the funerary possibilities – all of which may be filled with specific meanings and carry certain purposes. Body parts can stand metonymically for whole bodies, for instance, when a token deposit is sufficient to represent the whole body in a funeral, or when a body part is enough to make the person identifiable. Fragmentation has been shown to contribute to the building of relationships between people, objects and places; they become enchaind in social relationships by sharing parts of fragmented objects and people. Fragmentation plays a role in partial cremation in a variety of ways, by fragmenting the body before cremation, through fire as the active agent of fragmentation, or conceptually through differential treatment of body parts. The treatment of dead bodies, and in particular the ways in which bodies are grouped or fragmented, have increasingly impacted the way in which we think about personhood in later European prehistory (e.g. Fowler 2004; Knapp and van Dommelen 2008).

It is, as so often in archaeology, the social context of partial cremation that will give us clues to its interpretation. By giving practices between inhumation and cremation more specific attention, we may avoid the trap of prejudging the evidence in the light of a superficial binary classification. What appears as a cremation or inhumation burial may, under scrutiny, reveal much more variation in the way burial practices are conducted, and as such reveal the process of burying as a very personal act.

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CORPOREAL CONCERNS: THE ROLE OF THE BODY IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF ROMAN MORTUARY PRACTICES

Emma-Jayne Graham

During the late first and early second century AD the ‘standard’ Roman mortuary rite of cremation was largely abandoned in favour of inhumation; a shift which has been described as ‘the biggest single event in ancient burial’ (Morris 1992, 31). Explanations for this dramatic event have ranged from changing religious beliefs and the rise of oriental cults, to fashion, new forms of ostentatious display and elite competition (Nock 1932; Toynbee 1971). Very little attention has been paid to the possibility of a relationship between this change in practice and attitudes towards, or experiences of, the human body. Indeed, Toynbee’s (1971, 41) vague suggestion that ‘inhumation could be felt to be a gentler and more respectful way of laying to rest the mortal frame which has been the temple and mirror of the mortal soul and enduring personality’ remains the closest any observation has come to considering whether the body itself played a role in determining the nature of this change in practice. Superficially, cremation and inhumation involve different ways of treating the body: cremation brings about the violent destruction of the corpse, whereas inhumation maintains its integrity for longer. In reality, of course, it is not this straightforward, not least because the nature of cremation might vary immensely and, for example, cremated remains might be collected and used to reconstitute the body in some form or another (see Rebay-Salisbury, this volume). Nevertheless, when reduced to its most basic level, an essential dichotomy remains between the *intention* to transform the corpse with fire or not. So, whilst cremation and inhumation must certainly not be viewed as diametrically opposed, it cannot be denied that they involve distinct choices. It is hard to imagine that the people and communities of Roman Italy did not recognise this. With this in mind, this chapter diverges from traditional arguments and examines the evidence for inhumation in Roman Italy in order to explore how the inhumed body was treated and the extent to which this might reflect, or have created, new attitudes and intentions amongst the living with regards to the treatment and integrity of the corporeal form. It is argued that by foregrounding the body itself it becomes possible to view the broader change from one rite to another from a significant new perspective.

Re-embodiment the Roman funeral

Recent studies of mortuary practice in various archaeological and historical contexts have begun to focus on the materiality of the corpse and the embodied experiences of the living (see for example Fahlander and Oestigaard 2008; Kus 1992; Nilsson-Stutz 2003 and 2008; Williams 2004). However, the physical body has tended to be something of an afterthought in Roman mortuary scholarship. Recent work on funerary monuments, tombs, inscriptions, art, cemeteries, and grave goods has revealed the extent to which concerns about death, dying and the dead permeated all manner of social, economic and political activities, and many studies have focused upon the crucial issues of identity, social competition, status, politics and power, acculturation and the importance of personal relationships (see for example Carroll 2006; D'Ambra 2002; Flower 1996; Graham and Hope in press; Hope 1998; and papers in Carroll and Rempel 2011). Moreover, cemetery excavations in Italy have begun increasingly to take account of a wealth of palaeoanthropological and palaeopathological data in order to access the lives and health of people residing within the towns and suburbs of Roman Italy (for example, Catalano *et al.* 2001; 2006; Cucina *et al.* 2006). Nevertheless, in much of this scholarship the corpse itself remains something that is talked around, rather than addressed directly (although see Hope 2000 and Lindsay 2000). In a recent paper (Graham 2011) I argued that if classical archaeologists are ever to grasp the deeper significance of the activities carried out in the face of death by a mourning family or professional undertakers (*libitinarii*) this must be rectified. In particular, I suggested that the materiality of the corpse itself might act upon the senses, emotions and embodied memories of the living in such a way as to contribute towards the creation or maintenance of particular senses of personal or collective identity. Furthermore, embodied experiences of preparing the body were subject to change, perhaps as a consequence of an apparent increase in the professionalisation of the death 'industry' during the first century AD which may have reduced the level of direct contact between the bereaved family and the corpse (Bodel 2000; 2004). For example, the women of a family who could afford the services of an undertaker may have lost their traditional roles in the preparation of the body when funerary specialists were employed – something that not only altered their relationship with the corpse but also affected the way in which women maintained a collective familial identity (Graham 2011, 34). These nuances of experience can only be glimpsed if the corpse is placed back at the centre of mortuary activities and attempts are made to consider how its materiality might have impacted upon the senses, emotions, memories, and identities of those who encountered it.

In many ways this chapter picks up where this earlier discussion left off, investigating whether these changes had a more lasting significance. What was the long term, or more general effect of changing levels of interaction with the corpse, and how might these manifest themselves in the archaeological record? Are there notable changes in burial custom that correspond with the emergence of funerary professionals and, if so, do these suggest that attitudes towards the treatment of the corpse had changed as a result of the altered relationship between living mourner and the materiality of the dead? The most visible

change within excavated cemeteries of this period was noted at the start of this chapter: an increased frequency of inhumation. Could this be a partial consequence of new attitudes towards the dead body or, in turn, might it have contributed to the development of these new ideas?

Increasingly distant bodies

Similar questions to those posed above can, and have been, asked for other historical periods, notably by Sarah Tarlow (1999) who examined changes to both funerary practice and commemoration in the UK during the late medieval and early modern period. For Orkney, she demonstrated how new religious restrictions concerning purgatory, that were introduced during the Reformation, changed the relationship between the living and the dead, reducing the degree of interaction that was deemed appropriate. Under the new rules it was no longer necessary for the living to intervene on behalf of the soul through masses and prayers. This change concerned the fate of the soul, rather than the body, but nevertheless it involved a major change in practice that altered the framework within which the living interacted with the dead and created a need to develop strategies that were in keeping with the new restrictions. In this case funerary monuments were used to ‘extend the social memory of the deceased’ and Tarlow (*ibid.*, 89) suggests that ‘the memorial monument in some measure compensate[d] for the death of the physical body on earth.’ She also observed a trend towards increased sentimentality and expressions of grief on these monuments – perhaps an attempt to maintain a meaningful relationship with the dead in a format which suited the new circumstances, notably the distance between living and dead imposed by the new restrictions. It would be inappropriate to draw direct comparisons between post-medieval Orkney and imperial Rome, but this example suggests that changes to traditional forms of interaction with the dead might bring about new activities and emotions, or at least expressions of those emotions.

Similarly, in a paper concerned with the aesthetic body, Tarlow (2002) examined changing attitudes towards the material corpse during the nineteenth century, particularly the separation of mourners from the dead body against a backdrop of increased professionalisation of the funerary industry. Before this, family and friends had gathered to prepare the body, but this task came to be more frequently carried out by professional undertakers behind closed doors. Once again, a restriction in levels of interaction with the dead, this time involving reduced physical contact, can be shown to have produced new ideas about that body: in this instance the dead came to be laid out to appear as if they were sleeping, with emphasis placed on their beautiful, peaceful appearance in literature, epigraphy and funerary photography (Tarlow 2002, 87–88, 90). At the same time, evidence points towards a strong cultural denial of decay with greater use being made of coffins to conceal the reality of the decomposing body. Tarlow draws attention to instances, particularly in the United States, where windows might be inserted into the coffin lid in order to allow the family to view the deceased but which restricted this view to the

carefully posed face (*ibid.*, 93). These changes are period- and context-specific, but they highlight the extent to which a framework of increased professionalisation could intervene in traditional practices and remove the intimacy that had once existed between mourners and the corpse. In turn, these might be connected with the development of new attitudes and, as a consequence, new practices. In this context one might also highlight Mitford's (1963) revealing work on the ability of modern funerary professionals to consciously direct popular practice.

In terms of disposal, Tim Flohr Sørensen (2009) provides an instructive example of the embodied significance of a shift from inhumation to cremation in twentieth-century Denmark, arguing that the agency of the corpse – the way in which it compels the living to respond in particular ways – must be accounted for when considering the relationship between mourners and the deceased. Since the 1960s, cremation has come to dominate the cemeteries of Denmark, and Sørensen situates these changing customs in the context of an increasing industrialisation of death, which has removed the materiality of the dead body from the bereaved and placed it in the hands of professionals. He argues that this process has affected the way in which mourners conceive of the materiality of the body and their relationship with it. Traditional inhumation entailed a 'consciousness of the destiny of the deceased underground – her or his bodily putrefaction – [and thus] create[d] a more intimate spatial bond between the deceased and the relative than the consciousness posed by the ashes of cremation,' which, he says, 'could be anywhere' (*ibid.*, 127). Essentially Sørensen argues that changing disposal practices have established a new relationship between the bodies of the living and those of the dead, bringing about a new way of thinking about corporeal materiality and different ways of interacting with it based on an awareness of the presence or absence of the body. Although Sørensen contends with the Cartesian body-mind distinction of a modern context, many of his observations concerning the impact and knowledge of the materiality of the body are relevant to a study of Roman practice. Of particular importance is his suggestion that an awareness of the fate of the body might influence the way in which it comes to be understood. With these cross-cultural examples in mind we can turn to evidence for inhumation in Roman Italy in order to ask whether the processing and treatment of the inhumed body might reflect, or indeed bring about, altered attitudes and feelings amongst the living with regards to the corporeal form.

To cremate or not to cremate?

The Roman shift from cremation to inhumation has attracted much attention, although there remains little consensus regarding the underlying motivation for it; indeed it may not even have been as dramatic a change as some scholarship has assumed. It is usually dated to the very end of the first and the early second century AD, although as Taglietti (2001) has observed, inhumation actually appears much earlier at Rome and the two rites may well have co-existed for much of early Roman history (Graham and Hope in press). Indeed Vismara (1992) suggests that at Rome the change in rite may not have been that

momentous, since an ambivalent attitude towards inhumation already held sway within contemporary literature. Late Republican and early imperial writers did not consider inhumation unusual, and instead stressed the foreignness of rites such as embalming (Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, 1.45.108; Lucretius, *On Nature*, 3.870–893). Arguments concerning religious stimuli for the renewed popularity of inhumation, notably Jewish or Christian customs which emphasised the need to preserve the integrity of the human body, have been rejected on the grounds that neither possessed the requisite level of influence at this period to bring about such a widespread change (see Morris 1992; Nock 1932; Toynbee 1971, 40). Increased engagement with oriental mystery cults (such as Orphism and Mithraism) may have encouraged inhumation as practised in the eastern part of the empire where it had remained the dominant rite for many centuries, but again the influence of these cults can be questioned. As Nock (1932, 332) points out, customary forms of honouring the dead with traditional offerings continued as before, with no evidence for new influences or altered beliefs about the nature of the afterlife. Morris (1992, 68–69) argues that ‘the switch from cremation to inhumation is, at the highest level of generality, a diffusion from the Greek East to the Latin West’ but admits that ‘this tells us little’ unless we place it in the context of competitive emulation at both the level of the elite (in a time of renewed interest in Greek culture) and the emulative relationship between Rome and the cities of her empire. He notes that although inhumation may have been stimulated by a fashion for Hellenism, its use by the elite and imperial family transformed it into something ‘Roman’ before it spread subsequently to the provinces of the West (although the emperor himself often continued to be cremated, Davies 2000; Price 1987). Morris also suggests that the rite was adopted to bring cohesion to an empire that was heading for a period of crisis (1992, 68). Certainly inhumation came to represent an element of cohesiveness within a fragmented empire of later centuries, but to suggest that it was used directly to promote solidarity in the face of turmoil seems unlikely given that it appears to have become popular as early as the first century AD in some parts of Italy and really took off from the early second century when the empire was at its most prosperous and peaceful. Morris’ arguments for elite emulation chime with that of Nock (1932), who linked inhumation with changes in fashion, particularly an association with ostentatious decorated sarcophagi, the production of which became increasingly widespread from the second century AD. However, Toynbee (1971, 40) stresses that these expensively carved coffins are unlikely to have brought about such a widespread and lasting change in burial practice. After all, fashion is subject to frequent and sometimes unpredictable change but sarcophagi themselves remained popular with the elite, even if their designs varied (see papers in Elsner and Huskinson 2010). Although some sarcophagi have been known to contain cremated remains, and therefore do not have to be linked exclusively with inhumation (Nock 1932, 334 n.61), it seems very unlikely that the extensive sarcophagus industry began before inhumation became popular enough to support the large-scale production and export of such expensive objects, making them a consequence of the change rather than a driving force.

So where does this leave us? We can largely reject widescale or dramatic changes in religious belief although altered individual values are harder to detect, elite competition may

have had a role in spreading the rite but does not satisfactorily explain why it emerged, and the argument for elevated interest in Greek or eastern culture is weakened by the fact that inhumation appears to have become popular prior to its Imperial-period peak. Widespread production of sarcophagi can hardly have begun in earnest until there was a suitable market, which leaves ‘fashion’ – itself a rather ill-defined explanation related to the diffusion of the practice rather than its origins – and Toynbee’s remarks concerning gentle treatment of the mortal frame. Perhaps the latter deserves to be taken more seriously than it has been.

Morris (1992, 33) proposes that we ‘embed the change in body treatment in its ritual context,’ but continues to understand ‘ritual context’ in terms only of tombs, monuments and grave goods, not *embodied practice*, and sees ‘bodily treatment’ as a basic distinction between a cremated or inhumed body. This distinction has been criticised by Sørensen and Rebay-Salisbury (2008, 62) who point out that viewing cremation and inhumation as distinct entities ‘pushes explanations towards external or foreign agencies since in their total difference it becomes inconceivable that inhumation can “develop” into cremation’, and presumably vice versa. It might seem that to supplant cremation with inhumation is to simply stop processing the corpse with fire and to begin depositing entire bodies, but of course it is not that straightforward. Not only does this remove the often complex rites surrounding the burning of the body (in a Roman context this might include the spectacle of the pyre, placing the body on it, opening the eyes, ritual lighting and extinguishing of the pyre, collection of remains and their deposition, and processing of the *os resectum*; see Graham 2009; 2011a; Hope 2009), but the corporeal remains deposited in the ground, sarcophagus or tomb, also come to be treated differently. Inhumation may, at first glance, seem a far simpler process but it is naïve for us to assume a reduced level of bodily preparation or ritual. Indeed, burial of an entire body poses a range of discrete issues and may require as much, if not more, interaction with the corpse. Questions to be addressed by those responsible for an inhumation burial might include what the body is to be buried in, if anything – an earthen grave (with or without a tile cover), coffin, amphora, sarcophagus, tomb, catacomb? Will it be dressed, adorned, or wrapped in a shroud? How will it be laid out – crouched, extended, prone or supine? How will the limbs be arranged? What will accompany it and where will any items be placed in relation to the body? Will the body be embalmed or treated in any way prior to its burial? All of these actions distinguish the act of inhumation from cremation and require that those responsible for the burial come into contact with and experience the materiality of the corpse in its entirety. As a result they can also impact upon the nature of the relationship between the living and the dead.

Given its long standing presence as the dominant rite in the eastern part of the empire, the basic ‘idea’ of inhumation may well have been adopted from continued practices in the Greek East (although this is not the same as it being intentionally introduced), but something had to make it appeal to a community with strong traditional rites already in place. Maybe it offered something new at a time when the upper classes (those who could afford the services of *libitinarii*) were beginning to reassess their relationship with the dead body. By considering what ‘bodily treatment’ really entailed it might therefore be possible to examine the nuances of early inhumation in Roman Italy.

Inhumation and the body in Roman Italy

In order to draw these threads together – the popularity of *libitinarii*, the materiality of the corpse, changing forms of disposal and bodily treatment – and ask whether changed experiences of the body might have played a part in determining the manner of disposal, it is necessary to examine how the body was treated in cases of inhumation. Ancient sources have relatively little to say about activities associated specifically with the inhuming of bodies. Rites which took place immediately after death, as well as the washing and preparation of the body with perfumes and ointments, the period of lying-in-state and other preparatory rituals recorded within earlier sources, probably remained much the same given that these activities had no consequences for the final fate of the material remains (Mustakallio 2005). However, there are no descriptions of the activities that took place when an entire body was interred, in contrast to accounts describing the required activities associated with the pyre itself, such as the opening of the eyes, the lighting of the fire and its subsequent extinguishing with wine (Lucan *Civil War* 8, 729–58; Pliny the Elder *Natural History* 11.55.150 and 12.41.83; Statius *Silvae* 2.6, 84–93; Martial *Epigrams* 10.97 and 11.54; Tibullus 1.3, 5–8; see Hope 2007, 111–115). As a consequence it is difficult to reconstruct the events that might have occurred at the graveside. For the purposes of this discussion it will be assumed that the traditional preparation of the body as outlined in the ancient sources remained largely unchanged. These rites were concerned with controlling the materiality of the corpse as it began the process of putrefaction, at the same time as being vital to the reorganisation of social and familial identities and senses of personhood; the extent to which embodied experiences of these may have changed in the face of increased professional intervention has been discussed elsewhere (Graham 2011). In order to examine treatment of the body *after* these preparatory acts we must turn to the evidence for these bodies in the ground.

Protecting the body

One of the most noticeable aspects of inhumation across Italy during the imperial period concerns the degree of protection provided for the body. Some were interred within existing monumental tombs designed originally to accommodate cremated remains but subsequently modified; others were placed in new structures built specifically to house inhumations. Leaving aside inhumations within monumental tombs – many of which were excavated in an era when the structure of the tomb was considered more interesting than its human remains and for which we consequently lack detailed data – inhumation burials, like cremation burials, have been recovered in large numbers from the spaces between tombs at sites such as Isola Sacra, Sarsina, Alba, at necropolis sites around Rome such as the via Triumphalis and via Collatina, and from cemetery sites with relatively few monumental structures such as Gubbio, Ravenna, Classe and along the via Nomentana north of Rome (see below and bibliography for full references). In many ways these graves

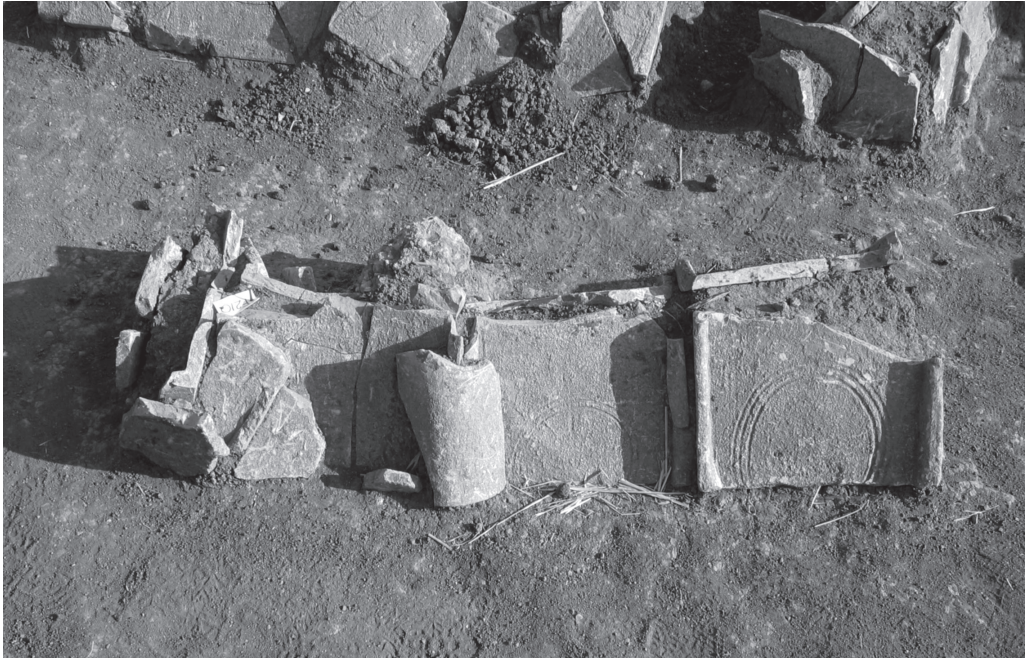


Figure 3.1. *Cappuccina* burial F210, Vagnari. Reproduced with permission from Tracy Prowse and Alastair Small.

represent inhumation in its purest form: ‘and because *humus* ‘soil’ is *terra* ‘earth’, therefore a dead man who is covered with *terra* is *humatus* ‘inhumed’” (Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, 5.23). They also provide a glimpse of what was considered important in terms of the body itself. Indeed, what is striking about many of these graves is that although they appear modest in comparison with monumental tombs, their form reflects a considerable focus on the protection of the body, with excavation frequently revealing evidence for some form of container into which the corpse was placed, or a structure built around or over the body. These include wooden coffins, wooden boards placed flat across the grave, undecorated terracotta sarcophagi, tiles or stones arranged either flat or ‘*alla cappuccina*’ (a gabled roof covering the length of the body), tiles used to line the sides of the grave creating an *in situ* box, fragments of amphorae and other pottery used to cover the body or, usually in the case of infants, the insertion of the body into an intact amphora (Figure 3.1) These structures were largely subterranean in nature, invisible on the surface, indicating that their primary function was related to the body with which they were associated, rather than being part of a wider typology of commemoration.

Into this category fall also the *cassone*, or barrel-shaped masonry structures, which represent small above-ground monumental structures (Bacchielli 1985; Berciu and Wolski 1970; Bonneville 1981; Julia 1965; Stirling 2007; Tupman 2005). Although these acted as

substantial grave markers (they might sometimes bear an inscribed plaque), and belonged to a particular tradition of grave monument, they too ensured that the body received adequate protection, not least because the remains with which they were associated were also often covered in one of the ways noted above. Many of the *cassone* at Isola Sacra were built over tile cappuccina graves (Angelucci *et al.* 1990; Baldassarre *et al.* 1996; Taglietti 2001) and at Ravenna, on the north-east coast of Italy, many were found to mark graves containing wooden coffins (Leoni *et al.* 2008). Indeed, in several cases a body might be provided with more than one layer of protection: coffins or terracotta sarcophagi interred beneath a cappuccina, sometimes with a *cassone* above.

Why go to such lengths to protect the corpse once it had been deposited? There was certainly a degree of fear about the souls of the unburied dead who might rise up and terrorise the living, as evidenced by a number of contemporary ghost stories, but these fears were largely put to rest by casting a few token handfuls of earth upon the buried remains (Suetonius, *Gaius*, 59; Pliny, *Letters*, 7.27. 5–11; Horace, *Odes*, 1.28). There is no written evidence for heightened fears of the un-dead during this period which might have made it imperative that the body be contained – something that is likely to have provoked comment, and probably derision, within contemporary sources. Nor is there archaeological evidence to suggest that these bodies were feared: they were not confined to the grave or held down with stones. Indeed, most were provided with libation pipes which provided direct access to the world of the living. The discovery in the necropolis of Castellaccio of a female skeleton with her forearm stretched up the libation tube – something that, barring the highly improbable chance that she had been buried alive, was presumably done intentionally – suggests that it was important to maintain a very direct relationship with the world of the living (Buccellato, Catalano and Pantano 2008, 18). If the intention was to bury the dead in order to prevent them rising, it seems odd that the living would provide such an obvious escape route. It also seems improbable that these subterranean structures were designed to prevent accidental or intentional desecration of the grave. An above ground marker would be a far more successful method for preventing accidental disturbance, and the paucity of grave goods throughout this period makes it unlikely that grave-robbing was frequent. Monumental tombs represented more obvious targets: a sarcophagus within Mausoleum 18 of the Viale della Serenissima near Rome, for example, was violated in antiquity but other more modest graves within the same tomb structure remained undisturbed (Buccellato, Catalano and Musco 2008, 77). If not fear of the un-dead or disturbance by the living, then perhaps the body itself had gained a new significance. These Roman communities had not only begun to bury entire bodies, but took care to ensure adequate, sometimes more than adequate, protection for them.

The use of tile and masonry structures to protect the body is commonplace across Italy during this period, and use of wooden coffins was also probably widespread. Relatively few complete coffins have survived although a small number were recovered from Isola Sacra (Angelucci *et al.* 1990, 109–111), and the inclusion of multiple nails arranged around the sides of graves may indicate their use, as seems to be the case for two infant burials at Vagnari in Puglia (Prowse and Small 2008, 5), although in some cases nails may have

served a ritual purpose (Ceci 2001). Excavations at Ravenna produced large numbers of well-preserved coffins, examination of which revealed that nails and other fixings were used sparingly, and in many cases the boards of the coffin were joined using wooden pegs (Leoni *et al.* 2008). As the authors note, this means that coffins may have been used in other graves and at other sites even when no iron nails are recovered (*ibid.*, 101). This observation is supported by evidence from recent excavations in the suburbs of Rome, where anthropological studies have revealed that a high number of inhumed bodies (90%) underwent decomposition in a void, suggesting that the earth was held away from the body (Buccellato, Catalano and Musco 2008; Catalano *et al.* 2006; see Duday 2009). Some, such as a well-preserved skeleton in mausoleum M2 in the via Collatina necropolis, seem to have been simply left in open spaces that may have been the result of coffins; others, including an individual from another grave within the same mausoleum, show similar signs of decomposition within a void but also demonstrate evidence for the use of a shroud or wrappings (Buccellato, Catalano and Musco 2008, 69–70). Despite being able to benefit from the protection that the mausoleum provided, both of these bodies were protected further by gabled structures constructed with flakes of tufa, brick and tile (*ibid.*, 69–70). It would appear that the graves were not backfilled with soil but that the bodies lay in open spaces beneath their covers. In such examples, where there is no sign of a protective structure but evidence for decomposition in a void, this may have been achieved either by placing the body within a wooden coffin or by laying a wooden board or leather cover over the body or across part of the grave cut (Buccellato, Musco *et al.* 2008, 29). As the evidence from Ravenna suggests, the absence of nails should not rule out the possibility of the former. A coffin, a tile cappuccina, and fragments of amphorae would also all have served to hold back the earth from the body.

It would appear that the integrity and safety of the corpse had gained a high level of priority. These subterranean structures not only protected the body from violation but also protected it from the earth itself. This seems at odds with understandings of inhumation presented by earlier written sources which refer to the need for ‘proper’ burial and suggest that a covering of earth was necessary to satisfy the demands of the (usually cremated) dead for proper interment (Cicero, *De Legibus*, 2.22.55–57; Cicero, *On Divination*, 1.27.56–57; Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, 5.23; see also Hope 2000; Kyle 1998). Nevertheless, a mere token sprinkling of earth was enough to ensure the fate of a dead sailor in an ode by Horace (*Odes*, 1.28, 10–6) and we cannot discount the possibility that a symbolic handful was thrown into these graves that were seemingly not backfilled.

There was certainly awareness, if not full scientific understanding of the process of decay in the Roman world (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 4.21). People would have come into contact with decomposition not only as part of their daily lives, but also as a consequence of their personal funerary experiences. For the elite, the deceased could lie in state for up to a week, during which, despite the best efforts of the family or professional *pollinctores* to hide the putrefaction process, the body will have begun to decompose. In the context of cremation this was important – it symbolised the decaying and transformed relationship between the living and the dead, followed by the final destruction of the body and its

subsequent remaking during the final purification rites (Graham 2009; 2011a). Cremation rites, with the materiality of the corpse at their heart, allowed the living to reconstitute both their own sense of personhood and that of the deceased. In contrast, evidence for inhumation suggests that this process had changed in favour of increasing denial of decomposition, and attempts to preserve the integrity of the body.

Wrapping the body

In addition to those noted above, evidence for shrouds has been identified within a group of cemeteries close to the via Nomentana to the north of Rome, where the position of the arms, either alongside the body or on the pelvis, points towards the use of wrappings (de Filippis 2001, 60; see also examples in north eastern Italy: Ortalli 2001). Inhumations from the via Collatina were also found supine, with the lower limbs extended and close together, indicating the presence of wrappings (Buccellato, Musco *et al.* 2008, 29). Indeed, 60% of the skeletons from this site showed signs of compression indicative of a shroud (*ibid.*, 29). Conditions of preservation mean that shrouds themselves are found very rarely, but a recent study of the Roman catacombs has revealed evidence for the use of wrappings made from high quality textiles (Mitschke and Paetz gen. Schieck 2012).

Why are shrouds significant? Certainly they are not a pre-requisite for inhumation, nor are they anachronistic within the context of cremation. However, ancient sources which recount the preparation of the body for cremation usually describe it as dressed, not wrapped, and in most cases the corpse was probably fully attired in their 'Sunday Best', which for a male citizen meant a toga (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6, 218–20; Juvenal, *Satire* 3, 171; Petronius, *Satyricon*, 77; Propertius 4, 7, 1–34; see Hope 2007, 97–98). This was part of the spectacle of cremation itself, not to mention the funerary procession (*pompa*) which moved through the streets of the town and allowed the family to make statements about the deceased and, of course, themselves (Cicero, *De Legibus*, 2.24.60). The body may have been wrapped during an earlier stage of its preparation before being unwrapped prior to incineration, as suggested by the recovery of an unburned sheet bearing traces of substances used to treat the body from an urn of the via Ostiense necropolis at Rome (Mitschke and Paetz gen. Schieck 2012). This seems not to have been very common: none of the (very few) sculptural reliefs dating from the late Republic or early imperial period which show bodies lying in state depict the corpse wrapped in a shroud (although it was common in much earlier pre-Roman period as the painted tombs of Lucania attest). If a wrapped body was placed on a pyre it can be assumed that the head was left unwrapped in order for the ritual opening of the eyes prior to the lighting of the pyre (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 11.55.150). For these reasons, and the fact that dress ornaments affected by the intense heat of the pyre are found within cremation deposits, it seems unlikely that many cremated corpses were encased in a shroud, whereas the absence of dress accessories in many early inhumations from the cemeteries examined here points towards a preference for shrouds rather than clothing for an inhumation burial. A shroud may have had a functional purpose,

to cover the body and hold it together as it decomposed (Duday 2009), and its use therefore supports the observations above concerning greater emphasis on the subterranean security of the body, representing attempts to prevent fragmentation and to keep the body away from the corrupting influences of the soil.

Concealing and containing the body

Shrouds and coffins were also both capable of hiding the essential materiality of the body, at the same time as drawing attention to its presence and stressing its newly peculiar character. In fact, concealing the body could actually bring its nature to the fore by signalling that there was something to hide. Once again, this contrasts with cremation practice. Cremation in ancient Rome, as in many other cultural contexts, was about making the corpse (either visually or sensually) into a recognisable 'object' from which the living could 'separate' during the cremation ritual (Graham 2009; Nilsson-Stutz 2003; Sofaer 2006). Inhumation, on the other hand, appears to have centred less on an objectified corpse, and more on the body that it had been when still animated by the living subject. Knowledge of its dynamic materiality persisted, but the living appear to have been concerned with allowing the body to retain its original identity whilst making attempts to conceal the transformations that it was undergoing (and certainly not hastening them with the violence of cremation). In many ways this is reminiscent of the avoidance of decay and more frequent use of coffins observed by Tarlow (2002) for nineteenth-century contexts.

As a result, we can expect this to have brought about different embodied experiences of the funeral. In instances of cremation the body, dressed in its finery, was on display. Exposure of the body, even if heavily anointed and perfumed to mask the scent of decay and powdered to hide the discolouration of death (Lucian, *On Funerals*, 11–15; Plautus, *Poenulus*, 63), evoked particular embodied memories, emotions and experiences for both the mourners and onlookers (Graham 2011). If the body was hidden within a coffin or beneath a shroud the impact on all concerned could have been very different. Firstly, the body may now have lain in state inside the coffin, as it might in some post-medieval and modern contexts (Hallam and Hockey 2001; Roach 2003; Tarlow 2002). This would alter the relationship between the bereaved and the corpse, given that its putrefaction, which previously was masked with perfumes but not completely hidden, was concealed still further. The body may no longer have decayed visibly in public, but that did not mean that those who encountered the coffin were not aware of what was happening inside, meaning that the coffin or shroud itself drew attention to the dynamic nature of the body by visibly highlighting the need to conceal both it and the transformations it was undergoing. Perhaps this was a further way of denying the realities of decay. By removing the corpse from view, the coffin enabled the mourners to perform the traditional rites, including allowing it to lie in state, but made it possible to maintain a distance from it. But, we might ask, why the need to do this now and not before? The changes brought about by use of funerary professionals and the distance that had been established between the bodies of the living

mourners and that of the deceased may be significant here. As Sørensen (2009, 125) suggested for Denmark, ‘as the proximity and contact with corpses decrease, the familiarity and intimacy with them also diminish.’ Once the compulsion to come into direct contact with the corpse was removed, Roman families may have become increasingly reluctant to interact with its decaying corporeality. This feeling may have been reinforced by the presence of the *libitinarii* themselves, who were widely considered to be polluted by their profession and were socially stigmatised (Valerius Maximus, 5.2.10; Bodel 2000, 140–141). As these professionals became frequent actors in the funeral, mourners may have become increasingly less eager to associate themselves with activities performed by polluted social outcasts. Consequently, they may have removed themselves still further from the (now) sordid corpse, seeing it as the domain of the undertaker and not the family, leading to a stronger desire to keep the dead body at arm’s length.

When the coffin was moved through the streets of the city during the funerary procession (*pompa*), death and the family continued to be on display in the traditional manner, but the body was not. Nevertheless, onlookers and those involved in the procession would have been aware of the contents of the box, or what lay beneath the wrappings of a shroud, so neither served to completely conceal the body. Indeed, they probably drew greater attention to it by inviting onlookers to speculate on what was inside, what it looked or felt like, and to associate it with their own embodied experiences and memories of death. This anonymous body may have actually facilitated the latter more efficiently, allowing people to abstract those emotions and experiences without them being tied to the particular identity of the body in front of them. The wrapped body would have still resembled the human form, even though its identity remained hidden, encouraging onlookers to confront and contemplate the corpse, whilst it remained concealed from view. In this sense it allowed the body to be both present and absent, visible and invisible. The coffin and the shroud concealed the reality of the dead body, whilst drawing carefully managed attention to it.

These observations point towards a greater need to *control* the body and people’s interaction with it; to keep it from view but maintain it in such a way as it would remain an entire body – the body that it continued to be in the minds of the mourners, even if in reality decomposition would eventually render it unrecognisable. Perhaps then, we can glimpse a denial of the process of decay and a desire to preserve bodily integrity in order for it to match up with an idealised image of the deceased.

Caring for the body

Recent work has begun to identify a heightened degree of sentimentality concerning the dead within literature and epigraphy of the later first and second century AD, including greater emphasis on the deification of the dead who sleep, rather than rot, in the grave (Valerie Hope pers. comm.). It might be argued that, like the Victorian example explored by Tarlow, this description of the dead using increasingly sentimental terminology was not linked with changing religious beliefs or secularisation, but diminished contact with the

corpse that necessitated an altered relationship with it. At the same time we find evidence that indicates a concern for the well-being of the material body of the deceased in the grave. Libations were associated with cremation burials, as evidenced at Gubbio by urns fitted with customised lead covers and pipes (Cipollone 2002), but facilities associated with offerings to the deceased increase in frequency at this time, with many designed in such a way as to maximise direct communication with the dead. Pipes were commonly located in order to deliver offerings directly to the head (and presumably the mouth) of the deceased.

Amongst the wooden coffins recovered from the via dei Poggi necropolis at Ravenna two were found to contain tiles, and four contained pieces of wood, all of which acted as pillows for the head of the deceased (Leoni *et al.* 2008). The wooden pillows varied in size from 30–40 cm in length and 10–30 cm in width, and were generally not very thick (around 3 cm). One particularly well preserved coffin, made using very substantial boards of oak (6 cm thick) locked together using wooden pegs and iron nails and resting on top of a laurel branch placed on the base of the grave, was found to contain a wooden pillow made from a slightly concave board propped against the end of the coffin (*ibid.*, 98–100). Wooden pillows are rare but probably existed in other cemeteries where there is evidence for pillows made from less perishable material. The cemeteries associated with the Boccone d'Aste estate, close to the ancient via Nomentana, and dated to the second century AD have not only produced evidence for the use of shrouds and coffins but also for particular care and attention to the 'comfort' of the body (de Fillippis 2001). Here the presence of coffins is suggested by the recovery of eight iron nails arranged symmetrically along the sides of a grave in the Southern Cemetery (*ibid.*, 59). The excavators suggest that coffins were more frequent within the cemetery but point out that evidence for pillows placed directly into the grave indicate that this was not always the case (*ibid.*, 59). On the base of two graves in the Southern Cemetery, and two graves in the nearby cemetery of the Vigne Nuove, a pillow made of a piece of stone (local volcanic tufa) was placed at the head end of the grave, and in five further cases a tile was used as a pillow (*ibid.*, 58). What is more, the Southern Cemetery contained a group of 13 graves in which the head end was curved, and a further 15 in which the grave narrowed at the neck before widening to provide a niche for the head (*ibid.*, 58). At least five graves at Vagnari (Puglia) had *imbrex* (curved roof tile) 'headrests', in two of which the body was also placed on a row of *tegulae* (flat tiles) (Prowse and Small 2008, 5) (Figure 3.2). The latter may have represented some sort of funerary bed. Pillows are attested in other cemeteries of the same period (see for example a child burial at Fiano Romano: Bianchi *et al.* 2004) and even when evidence for them is absent it remains possible that perishable materials were used for this purpose – wood, cloth and perhaps even feather pillows (Leoni *et al.* 2008, 102; Duday 2008, 215).

Pillows, and the attention that appears to have been paid to the head of the deceased, add an additional dimension to a discussion of attitudes towards the inhumed body. Aside from the libation facilities, these features served no ritual, religious or social function and appear to be entirely associated with the welfare of the body. Pillows might have been used to prop up the head of the deceased and make them appear more alive, or to give the impression that they were merely sleeping by preventing the head from falling backwards



Figure 3.2. Inhumation burial (F216) lined with tiles and with an imbrex pillow beneath the head. Reproduced with permission from Tracy Prowse and Alastair Small.

and looking lifeless – something that aligns with literary evidence concerning the sleeping dead (Hope pers. comm.; for the grave setting as a tableau in early medieval contexts, for example, see Halsall 1998 and 2003). It may not have mattered that these provisions could not be seen once the grave had been backfilled – the knowledge that this is how the body appeared, and that it was ‘comfortable’, was probably enough. In some respects this is reminiscent of the Danish situation described by Sørensen (2009), for which he argues that inhumation burial and the *knowledge* of the materiality of the unseen body can enable the living to maintain a particular understanding of that body. Pillows were not relevant in instances of cremation, but neither were they really essential for inhumation – a body can be placed in a grave without one – so it cannot be assumed that they were part of an incoming ‘inhumation package’. Instead, they seem to indicate that choices were being made on an individual level to place these bodies into the ground with particular care.

This concern for the well-being of the dead can also be set against the broader medical backdrop of the imperial age. This was a period in which medical writings flourished, with rich descriptions of symptoms, diseases, treatments and the actions of doctors and other health-related actors (Flemming 2000, 65). To these can be added more personal accounts

including, 'the long list of complaints and symptoms, the harping on health and its loss, that characterises, for example, the correspondence of Fronto, the orator and tutor of the future emperor Marcus Aurelius, and the autobiographical writings of another of his pupils, Aelius Aristides' (*ibid.*, 65). A discernible intensification of interest at this time in the state of the body, and particular concerns about its physical health, was described by Foucault (1988, 103). This seems to parallel the concerns outlined here for the security and wellbeing of the body in death, pointing towards changing relationships with the corporeal form across contemporary society more widely, including those with the bodies of the dead. It suggests, moreover, that changes to the state or nature of the body were increasingly becoming the focus of scrutiny, attention and debate, not only within health-related discourses, but also within the observations and experience of ordinary individuals.

In light of this apparent increase in attention to the wellbeing of the body, inhumation may have served as a more culturally appropriate means of disposal. Cremation was a violent event, not only as a result of the destructive action of the fire itself, but also the methods taken to manage the pyre and to facilitate the adequate disintegration of the corpse. The amount of water contained within the human body means that it is necessary to maintain the pyre and physically manipulate the cremation process in order for the body to burn and the bone to mineralise (Weekes 2008, 151; Williams 2004; see Rebay-Salisbury this volume). Ethnographic parallels suggest that part of this process might involve the use of a large stick to break up the burning material and, given the high water content and absence of fat associated with the head, to smash the skull (for examples of this in action in modern Nepal see, Pashupatinath cremation site 2012). Evidence from Romano-British *bustum* burials in which the remains were found to be dispersed, rather than in their correct anatomical position, provides some indication of the amount of violence involved in the cremation process (McKinley 2000; Weekes 2008, 151). The careful and close attention paid to the treatment of the head in imperial-period inhumation burials contrasts markedly with the forceful and brutal attention that the same body would have received on the pyre. If we wish to seek an element which might be emblematic of the changed values associated with the corpse we need look no further than this; indeed the two actions might almost be viewed as the antithesis of one another. To act so forcibly to bring about the public transformation of the corpse was evidently no longer aligned with cultural values.

Conclusions

There was a change in Roman burial practice beginning in the first century AD, and the factors which influenced this development are complex and multifaceted. It has been suggested here that amongst these were new attitudes towards the treatment of the corporeal body, including a new desire to ensure adequate, sometimes more than adequate, protection for a body which was now kept increasingly away from view. The integrity of a body seems to have gained special significance at this time, and it is unlikely that this was brought about entirely by a change of disposal practice, even if continued

use of inhumation acted subsequently to give these attitudes and practices greater clarity. Was it brought about because intimate interaction with the corpse in the early stages of the funeral had diminished? Certainly there was a different relationship with the corpse that was played out increasingly in the context of the grave rather than through contact with the body prior to its deposition. Perhaps there was felt to be a need to make up for reduced contact with the corpse during its preparation by paying particular attention to the body in the ground, something that may have been made easier by the fact that it was no longer visible and mourners were not compelled to deal directly with its decomposing appearance, unpleasant smell and unsettling nature.

It can be argued that by becoming distanced from the preliminary treatment of the body, Roman mourners began to develop new perceptions based on the fact that they no longer possessed the same embodied experiences of it: as the corpse became unfamiliar, it consequently became necessary to conceal it. Not only were embodied understandings of bodily treatment no longer based on the feel, smell or sight of the corpse, but such experiences had become the domain of the sordid, stigmatised *libitinarii*, which encouraged mourners still further to maintain a distance from the processing of the body. At the same time, this distance made it easier (maybe even necessary) to create or express a more sentimental relationship with the dead. Perhaps the fact that people no longer had to confront its physical decay directly meant that the immediate need to objectify the body was removed or reduced and it could retain something of the essence of the original subject or person that it had once been. Since mourners would not witness (or bring about) its violent destruction by fire and the forces involved in pyre management, and thereby 'separate' from it, a situation might have arisen in which subjective emotional connections could be maintained for longer. Physical distance might actually have heightened feelings of emotional closeness, as mourners attempted to find a way to fill the emotional gap that their previous preparations (and objectifications) of the body had fulfilled. Together these factors may have brought about new understandings of the corpse which stressed its putrefaction, unclean nature and strangeness, and as a result, shifted attention away from the body as it was prepared towards its final deposition.

Mourners were required to negotiate a new framework that suited this changed relationship with the dead and maintaining the integrity of the body offered one method of doing this. By making attempts to ensure that the body remained as intact as possible, by trying to reduce the potential for corruption and hiding its decay, and ensuring that the body (when it was seen) seemed to be sleeping peacefully, the living could feel happy that the dead lay comfortably in the ground. Even if it was not on view, the mere knowledge of the nature and arrangement of the body in the ground, as Sørensen has argued, might be sufficient. Through inhumation and the use of these particular strategies, the people of Roman Italy could create an idealised and sentimentalised body with which they could continue to interact during the on-going memory activities that are attested by the frequency of libation facilities. In this respect, their memories were far less embodied with experiences of the material bodies of the dead as they had been during the period of cremation, and instead were charged with a denial of that dynamic materiality.

Of course, the change from cremation to inhumation did not occur overnight; indeed the two rites appear to have co-existed for some time. Existing interpretations have tended to view this as indicative of a time lag in emulative activity (Canon 1989), with lower classes altering their practices more slowly, in emulation of their wealthier counterparts. This argument works particularly well for other aspects of Roman mortuary practice – epigraphic formulae, monument design, statuary and so forth – and, in the broadest possible sense, can also be proposed in the context of the arguments presented here. The elite were the first to have access to undertakers and their staff, and it would be those in Rome who were the first to make the most of their services. The funerary experiences of the upper classes would therefore have been the first to be affected by these changes in practice and perception, with those further down the socio-economic scale changing more gradually, perhaps as funerary professionals became more common outside the upper class community of the capital, or as the resulting practices were themselves emulated. Embodied experiences of the dead body would consequently have varied considerably across the social spectrum, and indeed throughout Italy and the empire.

What is not yet clear yet is whether inhumation was adopted because it was seen to suit these new attitudes, or whether it became popular for other reasons and its specific features were then used and developed to resolve the issues they raised. Indeed, the argument presented above points towards multiple factors operating in tandem. This question cannot be answered here, but, along with an investigation into how attitudes towards the living body might also have changed at this time, it perhaps forms the next step in this process of re-embodiment Roman experiences.

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‘(UN)TOUCHED BY DECAY’: ANGLO-SAXON ENCOUNTERS WITH DEAD BODIES

Zoë L. Devlin

We magan geseon, þonne man binnan mynster byrgene delfeð 7 þa ban þæron findeþ, hwilce we beon scylan

[we can see, when a grave is dug in a minster and bones turn up, what sort of thing we are going to be]

(anon. homily (Assmann XIV), transl. Thompson 2004, 102)

A (social) life after death

In the year 695, the nuns and monks of Ely under the leadership of Abbess Seaxburh gathered in the cemetery to commemorate Seaxburh's sister and predecessor, Abbess Æthelthryth (Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* [HE] IV.19). It was 16 years since Æthelthryth's death and the decision had been taken to translate her bones from their burial place in a plain wooden coffin in the churchyard among the ranks of her fellow nuns to a more fitting location within the church itself. A white marble coffin had been obtained from a ruined Roman fort near Grantchester and now the community and important guests gathered to honour the abbey's founder. A tent was erected over the grave and Seaxburh and a few of the nuns went inside to open the coffin and wash the bones, while the rest of the community remained outside singing. To their surprise, when they opened the coffin they found Æthelthryth's body to be intact and 'as incorrupt as if she had died and been buried that very day' (*ibid.*). Not only that, but an incision made in her neck while she was alive to remove a tumour had completely healed and there was no sign of the illness that had led to her death. The nuns washed the body, clothed it in new robes and reinterred it in the new sarcophagus within the church. The continued preservation of Æthelthryth's corpse, which was again attested to by new witnesses in the late tenth century, was taken as proof that she had retained her virginity despite two marriages and formed the basis of her cult throughout the Middle Ages (Blanton 2007; Love 2004).

About a hundred years after the community of Ely gathered to view Æthelthryth's remains,

the corpse of another woman was undergoing a very different post-death experience. Known today only as skeleton 6678, this 30–40-year-old woman had been taken to the judicial and administrative site at Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire, sometime in the late eighth or early ninth century, where she was tried and executed (Hardy, Charles and Williams 2007; Wilkins 2007, 141). Like her name, her crime and exact manner of execution are not known. However, after her death, her corpse was put on public display, suspended by her bound ankles, for a number of weeks. During this period, her dangling arms and head were attacked by scavenging dogs, becoming separated from her body. As decay set in, and probably helped along by the actions of the dogs, her torso separated from her legs and fell to the ground, where it was partially eaten. A couple of days afterwards, her legs were cut down, the parts gathered up and what remained was buried in a boundary ditch; her head and arms were not recovered (Wilkins 2007, 144–145).

The examples of St Æthelthryth and skeleton 6678 represent two extremes in Anglo-Saxon experiences of the corpse. While Æthelthryth's preserved body was venerated and served as proof of God's benevolence and her own piety, the corpse of skeleton 6678 was humiliated and served as a manifestation of an earthly lord's power and as a warning to others. These two cases share a number of common motifs, such as the need for witnesses in establishing a corpse's status and the link between physical appearance and the individual's true nature, as well as contrasting elements, such as exposure vs concealment, and protection vs destruction. Most importantly, as will be shown, these cases indicate how certain corpses continued to have a social life after death, with varying degrees of power and agency to affect the communities around them. However, it is argued here that the continued social life of corpses was not limited to the extreme cases of saints and criminals but also had an impact on the ways in which ordinary communities perceived and interacted with their dead.

Passive saints and active sinners?

Anglo-Saxon perceptions of corpses were complex and ambiguous (Thompson 2002, 235). On the one hand, decay and putrefaction were seen as normal and inevitable processes that would affect all but the most holy saints. It is clear that people were aware of the ways the body decayed after death. The anonymous homily quoted at the start of this chapter indicates that it was not uncommon for human remains to be revealed when new graves were dug, while the *Phoenix* poem, probably composed in the late eighth–early ninth century and included in the late tenth-century compilation the Exeter Book, describes the writer's awareness that his body will decay in its grave but implies that this does not matter as his soul will be set free and will be saved (lines 546–570, fol. 55b–65b, in Bradley 1995, 284–301). On the other hand, several texts with a religious theme equate the mould and decay of the grave very closely with sins committed in life. The poet of *Soul and Body II* (The Exeter Book, fol. 98a–100a, Bradley 1995, 358–362) depicts the soul haranguing the body for the sins it committed in life, which have led to them both being punished. For its gluttonous behaviour, the body now lies in its grave providing food for worms.

Similarly, the eighth Blickling homily *Soul's Need*, from the early tenth century, contrasts the ability of the rich man to exercise control over his life, for instance by choosing his own clothes, with the lack of control his body will experience in the grave as it oozes and decays (Thompson 2002, 234).

Corpses were therefore seen as reflecting the consequences of an individual's behaviour in life; they held up a mirror to the state of a person's soul. However, Anglo-Saxon attitudes to corpses reveal more than simply the consequences of good and bad living. The texts also reveal a structure within which corpses might act, or be used as a tool to act upon the living. Bodily control, in both life and death, seems to have been a major concern throughout the middle and late Anglo-Saxon period, while the exact focus of that concern shifted in line with the historical and local context in which the writer was working (for example, see Blanton 2007 for a detailed analysis of how representations of the living and dead body of St Æthelthryth altered between the eighth and sixteenth centuries; cf. Gretsche 2009). Bodily control, in the form of ascetic practices but most especially in the form of virginity, is a feature of the lives of saints whose bodies were miraculously preserved (Blanton 2007, 19, 65; Love 2004, cix; Thompson 2004, 235, 237). For example, St Cuthbert undertook regular fastings and vigils, sometimes not eating for three days (*Anonymous Life of St Cuthbert* [VCA], II.1; Bede's *Life of Cuthbert* [VCP], XVI) and was reported as being 'greatly wearied ... by lack of food' in the days before his death (VCP XXXVII). Ælfric states explicitly that it was St Edmund's chaste life that led to his preservation (*The Passion of St Edmund* [PSE]) and Bede emphasises the virginity of the female preserved saints (and sisters) Æthelthryth of Ely and Æthelburh of Faremoutiers-en-Brie (HE III.8, IV.19; see above). While Bede equates preservation with virginity more closely in the case of female saints than male, by the eleventh century the link between the two states was so well accepted that the discovery of the only partially preserved remains of St Edith (c. 961–984) raised some questions. Her thumb, torso and head (but not her face) were found to be as they had been on the day of her death but the rest had decayed (Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *Translatio Edithae* [TEdithae], Chap. 1). Personal memories of Edith at Wilton tended to focus more on her royal behaviour than her religious qualities (she was the daughter of King Edgar and had her own heated bath and private zoo; Hollis 2004, 233, 246) so the nuns may have thought partial preservation was no more than she deserved. Her apparent inability to fully control her own body certainly required some explanation and her hagiographer has her appear in visions to men of sound reputation to explain that she may have sinned with the decayed parts of her body but her virginity could not be questioned (TEdithae, Chap. 1).

The preservation of the saintly body is therefore seen as a reward for its control and self-denial during life and as a reminder to the faithful of the reconstitution of all bodies on the Day of Judgement (Walker Bynum 1995, 210–211, 213). The ability of the saint to act after death, however, varied according to the aims of the hagiographer and the particular context in which they were working. For female preserved saints in the pre-Conquest period, control over their own bodies in the form of preserving their virginity was often the only active role they took in their stories. For pre-Conquest writers, Æthelthryth and Æthelburh provided examples of the exemplary life, apparently performing no miracles before or after

death (*HE* III.8, IV.19; Stephen's *Life of Wilfrid*, Farmer and Webb 1998, 127–8, 130). Their incorruption is ascribed to God's agency, not their own (see Blanton 2007, 37 and 114 for Æthelthryth's lack of agency in the works of Bede and Ælfric). While St Cuthbert is ascribed a far more active role in life, leaving the monastery, preaching and performing miracles, in death he still typifies the passive saint, allowing himself to be handled freely by the monks of Lindisfarne: the *Anonymous Life of St Cuthbert* describes the saint's body as 'moveable at the joints', for 'when they lifted him from the tomb, they could bend him as they wished' (*VCA* IV.14). After the Conquest, under pressure to prove the worth of native saints cults, female preserved saints become far more active, performing miracles (see, for example, the vitae of St Wærburh, Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *Vita Sancte Werburge Virginis* [*VWer*]; St Æthelthryth, *ibid.*, *TEdithae*; and St Edith of Wilton, *ibid.*, *Miracula Sancte Ætheldrethe Virginis* [*MirÆth*]).

However, the image of the preserved saint is still that they were self-contained, unchanging and represented a fixed point in time. Any injury is healed, their bodies made whole again (e.g. the healing of St Æthelthryth's tumour and of St Edmund's decapitation; *HE* IV.19; *PSE*). Their bodies in both life and death were tightly controlled. Even the process of dying was managed, with holy men and women predicting when it would happen (e.g. *VCA* IV.9, IV.11). For the majority of men and women, death was an uncontrollable process (Walker Bynum 1995, 113) and this was especially so for criminals sentenced to death, such as the woman killed at Higham Ferrers. Executed criminals represented the threat of a complete lack of control, not only over their own behaviour but also of society over the individual (cf. Westerhof 2008, especially 17, 96–136). This threat was so great that it could only be overcome by severing those individuals from the main body of society. Their execution and continued exposure, whether for hours, days, weeks or months, emphasised their cast-out status from both life and salvation. Their execution was accompanied by loss of bodily control – trembling limbs, crying, loss of motor control would have doubtless been exhibited by at least some individuals on their way to the execution site; twitching, spasming and loss of bladder and intestinal control, as well as struggling and gasping for air during slow suffocation are common effects of hanging before the 'long drop' judicial hangings of the modern period and the stress experienced before and during execution by decapitation can only have produced similar loss of control among many (Westerhof 2008, 123).

Such loss of control does not end with the person's life. *The Fortunes of Men* (The Exeter Book, fol. 87a–88b, Bradley 1995, 341–343) describes the lack of control the executed body has after death – unable to stop the attacks of ravens or do anything to relieve its condition, the body is depicted as aware of its situation, the punishment continuing. The humiliation of such lack of bodily control would have been an important part of the punishment (see also Reynolds 2009, 27, 248; Westerhof 2008, 121–123). Exposure, with the effects of the weather and animal activity, would have meant the corpse was continuously changing perhaps on an almost daily basis. There would have been movement, as the body bloated and then deflated, expelling gases and liquids, and as parts dropped off or collapsed inwards (Goff 2009, 32–33). The actions of insects could also create the illusion of movement. All this is in contrast to the preserved saints who remained stationary and passive, unless

threatened, even allowing themselves to be posed like dolls. The corpses of sinners could therefore appear threatening, alive yet not, active in death, and able to alarm passers-by with movement and sounds.

Access to the bodies of preserved saints was also carefully controlled. For example, St Æthelthryth's body was only exposed to those few people present within the tent; the majority of the community did not see her body. The doctor called in to act as an independent witness was only shown her face, which was revealed by Seaxburh lifting the cloth covering it (*HE* IV.19). Monastic communities were very careful about controlling access to their saints' relics, so much so that it was apparently something that St Cuthbert was worrying about on his deathbed, instructing his brethren that, if they could not bury him on his island, to bury him 'in the interior of your church, so that while you yourselves can visit my sepulchre when you wish, it may be in your power to decide whether any of those who come thither should approach it' (*VCP* XXXVII). The concern of the saint about who had access to their corpse could continue after their death, with some saints taking action to protect themselves and punish the unworthy. So St Wærburh 'chose' (Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *VWer*, Chap. 12) to dissolve her body to protect it from Viking attacks and St Æthelthryth and St Edith of Wilton moved physically to prevent members of their communities removing parts of their clothing as relics (*ibid.*, *TEdithae*, Chap. 2; *ibid.*, *MirÆth*, Chap. 8), while St Edmund punishes an arrogant nobleman who demands to see proof of his preservation (*PSE*).

In contrast, the exposed criminal, like the woman at Higham Ferrers, was visible to all passers-by on route-ways or at fortified towns (Reynolds 2009, 155). For example, the execution sites of Guildown (Surrey), Staines (Surrey) and Steyning (Sussex) were all on major route-ways (Hayman and Reynolds 2005, especially 251; Liddell 1933; Lowther 1931; Reynolds 2009, 221–222), while four other sites are known just along the road between Winchester and Old Sarum (Stockbridge Down and Meon Hill, both in Hampshire, and Roche Court Down and Old Sarum, both in Wiltshire; Blackmore 1894; Gray Hill 1937; Hayman and Reynolds 2005, 251). References to *heafod stocc* (head stakes) in charter bounds may provide evidence for fixed sites on land boundaries where the heads of criminals were displayed after beheading (Reynolds 2009, 31, 243) while archaeological evidence has been found for the display of executed criminals at execution cemeteries at Bran Ditch (Cambridgeshire), Meon Hill (Hampshire), Roche Court Down (Wiltshire), Staines (Surrey), Walkington Wold (East Yorkshire) and Wor Barrow (Dorset), as well as the settlement site of Cottam (Yorkshire) (Bartlett and Mackey 1972; Buckberry 2008; Hayman and Reynolds 2005, 238; Liddell 1933, 133; Reynolds 2009, 166; Richards 1999; Stone 1932). At Walkington Wold, for example, twelve post-cranial skeletons were unearthed, ten of which had been decapitated. Eleven skulls were recovered separately and seven showed signs of wear indicating they had been exposed for some time before burial (Bartlett and Mackey 1972; Buckberry 2008; Buckberry and Hadley 2007). The existence of separate cemeteries for executed criminals in some areas may reflect the evidence from homilies and law-codes of the tenth and eleventh centuries that some sinners' bodies were considered so polluting that they could not be buried with the rest of the community (Thompson 2004, 171, 178). The

possibility that some corpses might have been displayed until they disintegrated, thus leaving no archaeological trace, cannot be ruled out. The decay of sin would have been a relatively common sight; the preservation of sanctity nothing but a story for all but a privileged few.

Access to and interaction with the corpses of the saintly and the damned would also have been two very different sensory experiences. Discovering a preserved saint was a tactile experience as well as a visual one – they are handled, washed and re clothed. Doubts about their preservation are resolved by sometimes extensive touching. For example, the preservation of St Wihtburh was questioned by the witnesses, who wanted to be sure that it was not simply dust preserving the outline of the body. She was touched all over and her hands and arms were lifted to check the flexibility of her limbs (Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *Vita Sancte Wihtburge Virginis* [VWiht], Chap. 20). That Cuthbert's corpse was so supple and life-like that the monks of Lindisfarne could 'bend him as they wished' (VCA IV.14), implies that they not only touched the body but spent some time lifting the limbs and rearranging them to see what would happen. No writer describing a preserved saint ever refers to a smell, whether good or bad, even though the graves of other (non-preserved) holy men and women are sometimes accompanied by the presence of a sweet smell in this period (e.g. HE III.8). Physical contact with executed corpses would have been avoided through fear and revulsion and there would have been a strong stench, especially in summer. The continuously changing nature of exposed corpses, coupled with the sensory experience of smell and the illusion of movement caused by insect activity and decay means that such corpses would have appeared to be active and would have had a strong affect on those who saw them.

Encounters with the dead in the community

Death did not necessarily mean that a person's ability to act upon society came to an end. Corpses, like other seemingly inanimate objects (Dobres and Robb 2000, 12; Gardner 2004, 8–10; Sillar 2004) could still continue to exert an influence over a community, whether for good or for ill. That the holy might be prevailed upon to support and protect while those who were cut off from God for their sins were feared was an integral part of late Anglo-Saxon Christian belief (for the fear of the dead and the steps taken to deal with potentially dangerous corpses see Blair 2009; Reynolds 2009; Semple 1998). Such beliefs structured the ways in which people encountered and interpreted corpses within their own communities. At the same time, however, individual experiences of dead bodies would have supported, countered or undermined such beliefs, depending upon the particular context and local situation. In this way, the choices of individuals and groups in the way they engaged with particular corpses re-negotiated and transformed the ways in which they perceived death and the dead as well as their own relationship with society (cf. Barrett 2001; Dobres and Robb 2000). By examining some archaeological examples of Late Anglo-Saxon encounters with corpses, we can begin to appreciate the variety of meanings that dead bodies might hold and the impact those meanings might have on living society.

In the middle and later Anglo-Saxon period, burial space became increasingly restricted: burial grounds associated with churches were increasingly within settlements, surrounded by properties that limited expansion and at the same time the cemetery came to be regarded as a sacred space, leading to the demarcation of that space with physical boundaries (Devlin 2007, 57–58; Gittos 2002). Unlike in the early Anglo-Saxon period, therefore, cemeteries could not always expand their boundaries as required. In addition, certain areas of the cemetery, in particular the areas closest to the church building itself, came to be seen as especially desirable, leading to denser burial in those parts (Devlin 2007, 53). Turning up old bones, along with not-so-old bones and only partially decayed remains, would therefore have occurred with some regularity, depending upon the size of the community and the amount of free desirable space within the cemetery. While disturbance of graves is a frequent feature (see Cherryson 2007), deliberate disinterment of the dead is harder to identify archaeologically, being dependent on the survival of clear-cut stratigraphical indicators of the re-opening of the grave, the movement or loss of bone elements that cannot be otherwise explained (*e.g.* by animal activity or natural decay processes within the particular cemetery environment) or other indicators that decay did not take place within a grave (*e.g.* weathering on bones indicating exposure or the presence of fly pupae) (*cf.* Aspöck, this volume). While several sites have shown evidence for the deliberate disturbance of some individuals within the community, it is likely that we are under-estimating the numbers involved, perhaps quite considerably. This chapter will examine material from five sites (Addingham, West Yorkshire; Repton, Derbyshire; St Andrew, Fishergate, York; St Peter's, Barton-upon-Humber, Lincolnshire; and Wells Cathedral, Somerset) where the evidence for the deliberate re-opening of graves and movement of bodies is indisputable. In each case, the reasons for the disturbance and the way the remains are dealt with are influenced by local concerns. However, a number of recurrent themes are also present that indicate an underlying structuring of the ways in which people thought of the dead.

The first site, the eleventh-twelfth century cemetery of St Andrew, Fishergate, contains only two examples of deliberate disturbance (burial 1847, a sub-adult of 12–14 years, and burial 6412, a possible female aged 40–50). Their jumbled but tightly packed bones indicate that they had been disinterred from their original burial places and redeposited at a time when each was partially decomposed. Burial 1847 (Figure 4.1) was tightly wrapped or re-wrapped in a shroud at the time of disinterment; enough flesh and muscle survived for the bones to remain mostly articulated but not enough rigidity remained to maintain the shape of the body (Kemp 1996, 76, 89; Stroud and Kemp 1993, 132, 148, 149, 157, 159, 263). Skeleton 6412 (Figure 4.2) may have been moved in an existing shroud, the movement during transportation causing displacement of the bones, with the vertebrae and ribs coming out of alignment and the shoulder blades and humeri rising up around the ears (Kemp 1996, 76; Stroud and Kemp 1993, 148, 149, 159, 274). One of these corpses (1847) was interred in relation to the first timber church at the Fishergate site and was aligned with its long axis in a very wide grave, implying a special status (Kemp 1996, 76, 89); the other was reburied to the south of the church with nothing to indicate special status.



Figure 4.1. Burial 1847, St Andrew's, Fishergate, York. Image supplied by York Archaeological Trust.



Figure 4.2. Burial 6412, St Andrew's, Fishergate, York. Image supplied by York Archaeological Trust.

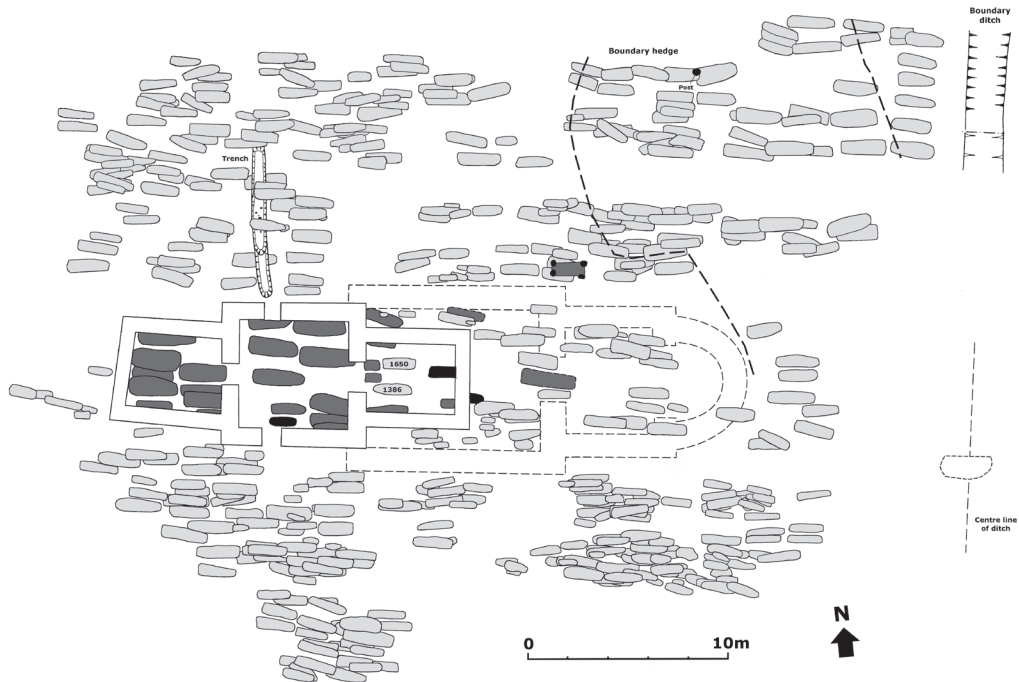


Figure 4.3. Barton-upon-Humber, Lincolnshire, based on Rodwell and Atkins 2007, figs 161, 164 and 167, showing excavated burials associated with the Anglo-Saxon three-celled church and the Saxo-Norman church (shown in outline). Disinterred graves are shown in dark grey. The three burials that were missed during the disinterment activity are shown in black. Graves 1650 and 1386 (within the three-celled church) were dug after the church had been built. The dashed lines to the top right of the plan indicate the limits of the waterlogging.

At the other four sites, deliberate disturbance was a more common feature. At St Peter's, Barton-upon-Humber, graves in two areas of the cemetery were subject to deliberate interference (Figure 4.3). The first incident, and the largest in scale, occurred during the construction of a three-celled stone church in the late tenth or early eleventh century (Rodwell 2007, 29), which led to the removal of twenty-six burials from the chosen space (Rodwell and Atkins 2007, 170–171). With the exception of three graves that were overlooked during the clearance, the remains from the site of the church were disinterred 'cleanly' (Rodwell 2007, 29; Rodwell and Atkins 2007, 172; Rodwell and Rodwell 1982, 294), with no small bones found during archaeological excavation. This was interpreted by the excavators as the result of all the burials being in coffins (Rodwell 2007, 29; Rodwell and Rodwell 1982). The second incident saw the re-opening of a prominent grave situated to the north-east of the chancel. This grave was covered by a wooden canopy, the only example at this site, indicated by substantial post-holes (Rodwell 2007, 20; Rodwell and Atkins 2007, 189–190; Rodwell and Rodwell 1982, 300). At some point after burial, the canopy was

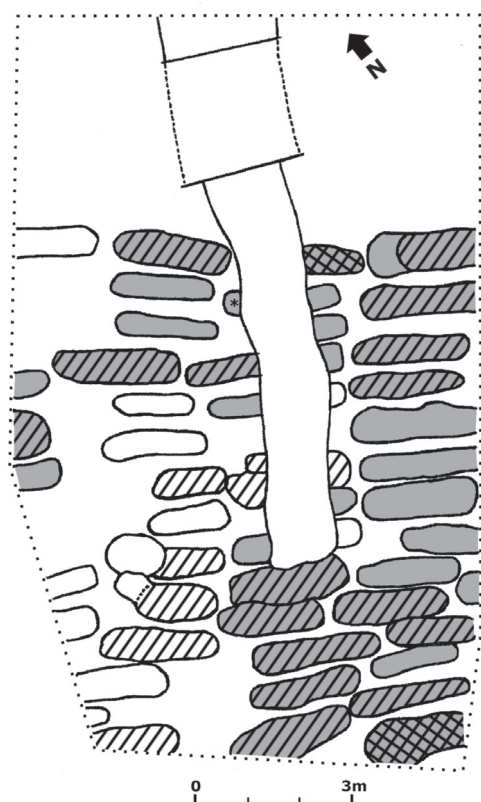


Figure 4.4. Addingham, West Yorkshire, based on Adams (1996), fig. 6. The dotted line indicates the excavated area. Graves with no shading or lines had no apparent interment. Grey shading indicates a primary interment. Graves with diagonal lines in one direction indicate a secondary interment. Graves with cross hatching indicate two primary interments and at least one secondary interment. The asterisk * indicates a grave with two primary interments and no secondary burial.

removed and the body taken away; a stone monument, perhaps a cross, was erected in its place (Rodwell and Atkins 2007, 189–190; Rodwell and Rodwell 1982, 300). The size of the grave implies that the burial was that of a juvenile or sub-adult and the excavators have interpreted the canopy to indicate that this grave also served as a shrine (Rodwell 2007, 20; Rodwell and Atkins 2007, 189–190; Rodwell and Rodwell 1982, 300).

At the eighth–tenth century cemetery at Addingham, West Yorkshire, disturbance of members of the community occurred on a much larger scale (Figure 4.4). Here, excavation revealed that half of the skeletons recovered (a total of 80 individuals in 55 graves) had been disinterred from their original burial place and reburied (Adams 1996). On the north-western edge of the excavation, a number of empty graves were found, while on the other side of the site several individuals were found to be sharing graves, indicating that the south-eastern part of the cemetery came to be seen as a more desirable burial place (*ibid.*, 163–165, 183–184). Some individuals who had been interred on the south-eastern side were shifted to make way for new bodies, their bones piled up around the edges of the grave. Others who had been buried on the north-west side of the cemetery were disinterred and reburied in a ‘better’ place to the south-east, either as disarticulated bones alongside a recently dead body, or as a whole corpse themselves, depending on their state of decay. Some graves revealed a

complex series of burial events. In one case, six individuals were dug up and reburied with an articulated corpse, which itself was an additional interment to the grave of a reburied individual (*ibid.*, 167). In another example, a disinterred individual was reburied, followed by two recently dead people and then by two more reburials (*ibid.*, 165).

The final two sites, Repton and Wells Cathedral, provide evidence for mass disinterment and reburial, in each case possibly in a single event. At the double monastic house at

Repton, a sunken two-celled building, interpreted as a disused mausoleum, was knocked down to ground level and re-used for the re-burial of some 264 disarticulated individuals, a cairn and an earth mound being raised over the top (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 2001, 67–74). Radiocarbon dates indicate that about half of these people had died in the late seventh – mid-eighth centuries while others may have died sometime in the ninth century (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 2001, 78–79). Five silver pennies minted in the 870s were also found, indicating the earliest possible date for the sealing of the mausoleum under the earth mound (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 2001, 69). The mound and surrounding area was subsequently used for other burials. The presence of a substantial defensive enclosure around the churchyard and individual burials of possible Scandinavians has meant that the mass reburial has been linked to the presence of the Viking army at Repton in 873–4, as recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, with initial interpretations of the reburial as a Viking rite designed to promote their control over a place that had been linked with the Mercian royal family (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 1992; 2001; Richards 2002, 167). However, the argument that the reburial is of members of the Viking army or their ancestors has been critiqued. There is no direct evidence that the deposit was related to the specific events of 873–4 and it can best be interpreted as the reburial of individuals from the monastic cemetery, similar to that which Bede describes happening at the double house at Barking (*HE* IV.10; see also Hadley 2001, 102; Halsall 2000, 263; Richards 2004, 103). Their original burials may have been disturbed during the construction of the bank and ditch enclosure around the churchyard or perhaps during the later reconstruction and repair of the monastery when the bank and ditch were levelled.

The evidence from Repton can also be compared with that from Wells, where a single-celled sunken building was re-used for the deposit of the disarticulated bones of at least 42 people, most likely in the middle to late tenth century (Blair 2004; Rodwell 2001, 76–78). Radiocarbon dates from these burials indicate dates of death ranged between the seventh and tenth centuries (Rodwell 2001, 78). The excavator has argued that the absence of implement scars and the generally good preservation of the bones indicates that they were turned out of coffins rather than being accidentally disturbed during trench or grave digging (Rodwell 2001, 77). The stratigraphy of the site is complex and difficult to interpret. However, following Blair's (2004) suggested reinterpretation of the sequence as given by Rodwell (2001), it is possible that the redeposited bones were disturbed by the construction of the first phase of building of a church to the west. Alternatively they may have been displaced during the destruction of another building elsewhere on the site (Rodwell 2001, xxi).

Location, location, location

The dead had a reciprocal relationship with their environment, which is to say that their presence within a particular area of the cemetery could serve to define a space as well as enhance their own status. The burial of several members of a family might mark out a

plot as 'their own' while the interment of a well-respected or revered person might lead to a particular area being seen as 'special'. Equally, burial in an area of the cemetery seen as particularly holy could be especially sought after, conferring status on the dead person and their family. While this is true for all burials, it is especially so for those that had been moved from their original burial place. The opening of the grave, the viewing and handling of the remains and the negotiation of a removal to a new place, which might involve balancing the perceived wishes of the dead as well as those of the living, served to redefine and reconstitute the identity of the dead person and all those connected to them. The funerary rites, including the procession from house to grave and the creation of a tableau at the graveside, has been argued to be a means of establishing a lasting identity for the deceased and of 'finishing' their memory, creating an image of how they will be remembered and a story of their life that has an ending (Devlin 2007; Halsall 1998; 2003). The preparations for the funeral and the event itself would be a time in which people could dispute the story and the status that it conferred on the deceased, for or against the deceased's (and their own) benefit. While stories of the dead might be tweaked over time, it is direct physical contact with the remains of the corpse that could lead to the most radical changes in the way they were commemorated.

The state of preservation of the remains would have been fundamental to the re-negotiation of the identity of the deceased. Many factors affect the rate of decay of dead bodies, including temperature, humidity, soil type and acidity, depth of burial, use of wrappings or containers, time between death and burial, cause of death, the presence or absence of other decaying bodies nearby and the amount of body fat on the deceased (Chamberlain and Parker Pearson 2001, 13–17; Galloway 1997, 146–147; Gill-King 1997; Henderson 1987, 45–52; Hunter 1996, 13; Hunter and Cox 2005, 30; Janaway 1996; Pollard 1996, 141). For example, Cuthbert's preservation was most likely caused by a combination of emaciation and dehydration, aided by his burial in a waxed shroud and stone coffin (cf. Bonser 1962, 235; Chamberlain and Parker Pearson 2001, 14; Daniell 1997). Environmental conditions can vary depending on the time of year, with bodies decaying more slowly in winter, but also the particular conditions could vary within a cemetery, or even within a grave leading to differential preservation, as in the case of St Edith of Wilton (Ubelaker 1997, 81; for examples, see Rodwell 2001, 71–72; Waldron 2007, 21; cf. Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *T_{Edithae}*). The range of influences on rate of decay cannot be fully predicted today and the establishment of time since death in the cases of discovered bodies is still only an estimation (Goff 2009, 22; Janaway 1996, 63). However, people generally have an expectation that decay of the corpse to a skeleton should happen within a fairly short period of time (Haglund and Sorg 1997, 5) and the failure of corpses to behave in the generally expected way requires an explanation. In eastern Europe of the eighteenth–twentieth centuries, graves were regularly re-opened for the skeletal remains to be moved to a communal burial chapel; the discovery of apparently fresh corpses after one, three or perhaps ten years of burial were explained by the notion that the deceased was a vampire (Barber 1987; 1988). The implication was that a 'normal' corpse should have been reduced to bone within the given time. Likewise, it is clear that a preserved body was not

what the monks of Lindisfarne were expecting when they opened the grave of St Cuthbert eleven years after his death (*VCA* IV.14; *VCP* XLII; *HE* IV.30). Bede says that the monks expected to find Cuthbert's bones 'quite dry, the rest of the body, as is usual with the dead, having decayed away and turned to dust' (*HE* IV.30; see also *VWihht*, Chap. 20). Within the context of Cuthbert's holy life his preservation was interpreted as a miracle and a sign of God's favour but an explanation was still required.

It can be assumed that the people who re-opened the graves of the dead would have had an expectation of what they were going to find there, based upon the length of time since the funeral. In some cases, the reality might have come as a shock. When Abbess Wulfthryth (c. 940–?1010) ordered the exhumation of Edith of Wilton she was confronted by the sight of the partially decayed, partially preserved, remains of her own daughter, her torso intact, her skull intact but her face gone. How might such a thing be explained? The body was closely linked to self-identity and decomposition was feared as the destruction of the self (Walker Bynum 1995, 113). The pains taken by Edith's hagiographer, Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, eighty years later to account for her only partial preservation can be seen not only as an attempt to justify the existence of the Anglo-Saxon cult to the country's new Norman overlords (Hollis 2004, 259–260) but also as an example of the kinds of discussion that must have taken place within Wilton itself to deal with the issues that such a sight must have raised.

An unusual sight may have greeted the community at Barton-upon-Humber when they re-opened the canopied grave to the north-east of the church. Many of the Anglo-Saxon burials at this site were below the water table, with 41 graves from this period being sufficiently waterlogged to allow the survival of timber from coffins (Rodwell and Atkins 2007, 178; Waldron 2007, 133–171). The waterlogged burials were concentrated to the north-east of the site, with the closest to the canopied grave being less than 4 metres away (Figure 4.3). Such anaerobic conditions may have created an environment that would slow down decay. Waterlogged graves provide ideal conditions for the formation of adipocere, a wax-like substance formed from body fats that can create the illusion of a life-like appearance by plumping out fatty tissues such as the face (Chamberlain and Parker Pearson 2001, 18, 23; Janaway 1996, 70; Rodriguez 1997, 460). The grave was evidently that of an important person within the community, even though the available evidence indicates they had not reached adulthood, and if the excavators' interpretation of the four wooden post-holes as a shrine is correct it is likely that this person was revered because of their sanctity. The re-opening of the grave may therefore mirror the events of the saints' *vitae* in that the intention was to translate the remains to a more fitting resting-place, most likely within the church.

The possible discovery of the corpse in a preserved condition would have confirmed and perhaps enhanced the sanctity of the deceased and the status of the church and wider community. Such a possibility might explain the discovery of other coffined burials on the site that had been deliberately filled with clay or mud (Rodwell 2007, 25–26). Thirty such burials were found in a group to the north of the church and a further seven grouped to the south-east, not far from the contemporary boundary ditch (Rodwell 2007, 25–26). The

discovery of an intact body encased in waterlogged soil might have inspired others to emulate it when burying family members, or perhaps to attempt to prolong the preservation of their own bodies to the benefit of their souls, as dense, clay-like soils can slow decomposition (Henderson 1987, 48). Alternatively, the re-opening of the grave may have challenged the community's view of the saintly nature of the person buried there. While in some conditions a damp environment can lower oxygen levels and hinder decay, in others the presence of water can encourage the growth of bacteria which attack soft tissue (Gill-King 1997, 94). In addition, in moist or wet conditions, skin slippage can occur while saponification can lead to adipocere formation on the skin surface, which can cause severe distortion of the facial features (Goff 2009, 25–26). The discovery of a supposedly holy boy or girl in such a state may have led to a re-assessment of their life; to be neither dry bone nor preserved but in an unrecognisable state would have implied they had committed a grave sin and that the community had been misled. The removal of the body, perhaps out of the churchyard, and the erection of a stone cross over the grave may have been intended to cleanse the site of an unwholesome influence rather than to celebrate their life.

The sight and smell of the re-opened graves was just one way in which the living made contact with the dead. The handling of the remains was an integral part of the re-connection and interaction. As well as the necessity of touching the remains to move them to a new resting place, the *vitae* of the preserved saints indicates that touching the saints' bodies was essential for enabling the observers' belief in the miracle (e.g. *VCA*; *VWihl*, Chap. 20). Sociological studies on touch have shown that physical contact can make experiences more 'real' and personal, a part of the audience's own life experience rather than something merely observed from a distance (Pointon 1999; Stewart 1999; see also Devlin 2001, 21). There is a strong element of voyeurism in all of this (cf. Higa 2008; Karkov 2003, 400). Both the saints' *vitae* and also evidence from anthropological studies (e.g. Connor 1995) indicate a strong fascination for corpses, especially among the wider community outside the immediate family. Viewing a corpse invites the audience to judge the body, its actions in life, status in death and by association the status of family members who might have brought about or opposed the opening of the grave. Control of access to the corpse would have also enabled control of the stories told about them and of the impact that the re-opening of the grave might have on the community. The disinterment of St Æthelthryth was a carefully managed event during which only a privileged few actually got to view her remains. Even those within the tent erected to cover the grave and hide the spectacle from the assembled crowd had their access to the corpse controlled; the doctor who had attended her in her last illness only saw her face and neck, as presumably he had done when he examined her in life. The exposure of the corpse, as we have seen, was considered a humiliation, with the still-recognisable person unable to cover themselves and avoid the gaze of the curious. The re-opening of graves would have raised questions about who was allowed to encounter the corpse. Too few witnesses might mean that stories of the dead could be challenged. But allowing large crowds to view the remains risked angering the dead. If the dead could be active, then wilfully ignoring the wishes of the corpse in this matter could be dangerous.

If the translation of St Æthelthryth was carefully controlled, the disinterment of the bodies from the site of the new church at Barton-upon-Humber might be seen as being equally stage-managed in the desire of the community to protect the bodies from harm or humiliation. The lack of any small bones in the emptied graves and the shape of the grave cuts imply that they were removed within their coffins, which were still intact at the time of disinterment. The people removed from the graves were presumably then reburied elsewhere on the site. This careful disinterment and reburial was a prelude to the construction of a church, which would have carried with it implications for the commemoration of the dead in the community. While this disturbance was doubtless undertaken for practical reasons, it can be imagined that it proceeded with careful and solemn ceremony, perhaps occasioned at least in part by concerns of living relatives. Whether all members of the community viewed the disturbance of their relatives with pragmatism, or indeed had any say in the matter, cannot be known. In contrast, the disinterment and reburial of the corpses later numbered 1847 and 6412 from St Andrew's, Fishergate would have involved direct physical re-engagement with the corpse with all the senses. The sub-adult 1847 may have been a person of some significance, given their reburial in direct alignment with the church in a sizeable grave (Kemp 1996, 89). They may have been a close relative of the founder of St Andrew's or a young person with the reputation of sanctity, moved to the cemetery from a burial site elsewhere in York or further afield to enhance the new church's status. The position of the bones on excavation indicates that the flesh was still for the most part intact but that the internal organs were likely to be putrified and the ligaments and muscles were in the process of rotting, allowing the displacement of bones when the body was wrapped in its shroud (cf. Gill-King 1997, 97–98). It is likely that the skin of the corpse would have been discoloured and the face swollen and misshapen. The smell that would have been noticeable on opening the grave would have been heightened by the tight wrapping of the body in the shroud, moving the decomposing elements within the body. Liquid sounds would have attended the movement of the body. Finally, the feel of the corpse as it was lifted, rotated and wrapped would have been very different to how it felt at the time of his/her first burial when they would have felt more human and 'normal'; in its decomposed state, it would have been possible to feel the bones moving within the flesh out of their proper alignment.

Connor (1995) has argued, in the context of Balinese Hindu funerary ceremonies that the confrontation of the physicality of the corpse heightens the emotional response to personal loss, especially in people un-used to dealing with such sights. It is possible that the special status of the dead person here means that close relatives were not directly involved in handling the corpse. However, funerals and their preparation were usually public events and if St Andrew's was to gain status by the re-interment of this person here then it was essential that as many people as possible saw the ceremonies and understood their meaning. If the re-burial was due to the perceived sanctity of the person, the state of the corpse may have undermined any assertions that the church and its founder might have made in the eyes of some members of the Fishergate community. Saints generally took the form of dry bone or life-like corpse; a rotten saint was an impossibility. However, the

surrounding graves may indicate that skeleton 1847 was able to maintain their status after their decomposition was brought to light. Although the excavators report that skeleton 1847 did not appear to attract other burials (Stroud and Kemp 1993, 157), it is notable that there is another prominent grave containing a sub-adult skeleton to the east of skeleton 1847, again in line with the church (Kemp 1996, fig. 155). In addition, two men killed in battle were buried nearby, suggesting that this might have become a special area of the cemetery. If the Fishergate community recognised skeleton 1847 as a special burial then perhaps the corpse's condition made the person easier to identify with: someone whose body would undergo the normal processes of decay, who would have sinned in life, just like everybody else. This may have made him/her a natural focus for the graves of people who had died a 'bad death' in battle.

The collection of bodies to the east of the church at St Andrew's Fishergate (the two sub-adults in large graves and the bodies of those killed in battle) may represent the interests of the secular lord who owned the church and cemetery, providing a focus for the commemoration of people of high secular status. In bringing these bodies together, and commemorating their souls in the same place, he may have been attempting to enhance the status of the church. Many Late Anglo-Saxon cemeteries were carefully controlled by their secular owners or the clergy, showing evidence of plots or rows and an agreement reached at some level about who could bury their relatives where. As burial location was linked to salvation, the ability to control where people could be buried gave some members of the community a good deal of power. The reburial of the disarticulated remains at the church at Repton has attracted a good deal of attention from scholars examining the Viking raids and settlement. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* reports that the 'great army' established its headquarters somewhere at Repton over the winter of 873–4 and the massive bank and ditch has been interpreted as evidence that the army was quartered at the monastery itself. However, the association of the Viking army with the site has influenced the interpretation of other aspects of the army as well. The five silver coins found in the charnel deposit have been taken as evidence that the disinterment and reburial were directly related to the events of that winter. In addition, antiquarian accounts that the charnel was originally arranged around the central burial of a 'giant', nine feet long, in a stone coffin have been used to argue that this was a ritual deposit to accompany the burial of an important Viking, suggested to be Ivar the Boneless (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 2001, 47, 81–84; e.g. Hall 2000, 150; Richards 2004, 102; but see Halsall 2000). Finally, the burial of four sub-adults in a single grave nearby, with a possible substantial wooden marker, has been suggested to be a human sacrifice associated with the closing of the mound (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 1992, 45; 2001, 74). The disinterment of such a large number of people by the Viking army has been seen as a statement of their political control over the Mercian kingdom, either by bringing their own dead ancestors to a site with strong royal connections to claim it as their own, or by re-interring the bones disturbed by their defensive works as a sign of accommodation with the local community (Richards 2004, 103). If the charnel deposit was interred by the Viking army, the re-depositing of the bones would have made a strong statement to the local community about the power that the Vikings could exert. The careful reburial in

such a substantial monument may have indicated that the army feared the local dead and wanted to appease them, in particular as the site was under the protection of St Wystan and miracles occurred at his tomb in the church. Alternatively, the charnel deposit may have occurred after the Vikings had left and represent the local community's attempts to re-assert their own control over their cemetery and renew ties with the dead.

The similarities between the redeposited remains at Repton and those at Wells, however, as well as the reference by Bede to the removal of bones to a mausoleum at Barking, may suggest that this event had nothing to do with the Viking camp but with other events in the life of the cemetery. The church at Repton was restored in the early tenth century (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 2001, 53) and the mound became a focus for burials from around the early – mid-tenth century (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 2001, 85–86). At Wells, the sequence posited by Blair (2004) suggests that the reburial of the disinterred skeletons might be related to the construction of the first Lady Chapel in the first half of the tenth century. It might be argued therefore that the disinterment of old burials at both these sites was partly practical, related to building works, but at the same time part of a ceremony marking a new chapter in Christian worship and commemoration. In such a case, it was the authority of the church itself that made the decision, countered any arguments and decided what form the attendant ceremony should take. At Repton, the restoration of the church of St Wystan coincided with it becoming a minster with parochial functions. Perhaps here, the movement of human remains was a statement about the new functions of the church and a severing of connections with the past – the old monastic cemetery cleared out to allow the burial of people from the new parish. Parallels may also be drawn with the two inscribed lead plaques of the eighth-ninth centuries discovered at Flixborough, Lincolnshire, and Kirkdale, North Yorkshire, both believed to have been commemorative in nature and attached to ossuaries or monuments containing disarticulated bones (Foot and Roffe 2007, 141; Loveluck 2007, 28; Rahtz and Watts 2003, 300; Watts *et al.* 1997).

The question of who had control over burial in a cemetery is a hard one to answer. While events such as the mass reburial of dozens or hundreds of people might imply a single authority making decisions, in other cases it can be argued that there was a community agreement about the placing of burials, or that individuals were allowed a certain amount of freedom in their decisions. At Addingham, for instance, the movement of several individuals, presumably in several different events, implies that no one single authority was in control. As argued by the excavator Max Adams (1996), disinterment and reburial seems to have been motivated at this site by a perception that the southern and eastern areas of the cemetery were more desirable places to be buried, perhaps due to the existence of an undiscovered church or stone cross outside the boundaries of the excavation. This perception presumably developed part way through the life of the cemetery as indicated by the disarticulated nature of the reburied bodies – they had been interred quite happily in their original graves long enough to decay to this state before it was decided that they needed to be moved. These burials were not so cleanly exhumed; some bones were left behind in the original grave, perhaps because stone coffins were not in use at this site. What is interesting here is the continued investment by members of the community,

probably family members, in individuals who were not only long dead but also thoroughly decayed. The benefits that could be conveyed upon people from their particular burial location within the cemetery could also be used to help and support those who had been dead for a long time. Perhaps by moving these individuals closer to the focal point of the cemetery the community at Addingham hoped to off-set the sins that had resulted in the decay of the body.

Conclusion

The combination of the documentary and archaeological evidence suggests that Anglo-Saxon encounters with dead bodies would have been fairly commonplace; certainly there are no indicators that the re-opening of graves between the seventh and eleventh centuries was unusual or something to be avoided. The anonymous homilist quoted at the start of this chapter indicates the close connection that people could feel towards the remains of the dead, even where there was no personal relationship. Even dry and dusty bone could generate some level of empathy and acknowledgement of a shared human experience. Most importantly, viewing the remains instructed the observer about what kind of person the deceased had been in life and acted as a reminder of the potential fate that awaited the living. The corpses of the two women examined above, St Æthelthryth and skeleton 6678, represent two extremes in the post-mortem fate of the body in this period, one representing the ultimate in virtue and the other the fate of the great sinner. Æthelthryth's preserved body was treated with great respect, hidden from casual gaze and protected by placing in a coffin inside a church. Skeleton 6678 was exposed for all to see, perhaps naked, humiliated, hanging unnaturally and left to the elements and the dogs. In both cases, however, the community acted as witnesses, judging their lives on the state of their dead bodies and both transmitted messages about appropriate behaviour and self-control.

Dead bodies inhabit a troublesome middle ground between object and person. Although without personality, they are too human-like to be completely objectified. They can simultaneously act as reminders of loved individuals while also repulsing the living with their lack of animation. The evidence explored here indicates that the corpse exhibits an uneasy balance between activity and passivity. A preserved saint, while outwardly immobile, could be dangerous when not shown sufficient respect and could act unseen to cure the sick. The decayed corpse of the sinner could have a harmful influence on both the living and the dead, and yet appear in most cases to bear their humiliation and punishment with equanimity, apparently seldom afflicting the living. This unpredictability means that dead bodies are not easy to control and people's reactions to them might be equally changeable. A preserved saint might be as much of a nuisance as a blessing; Cuthbert of Lindisfarne would doubtless have been far easier to carry around northern England as the monks fled from the Vikings if he had been dry bone. Saints could also attract criminals seeking sanctuary (see *e.g.* *VCP* XXXVII) and while the church would have attempted to control what miracles were attributed to them, alternative narratives would have sprung up among

local communities. Equally, the discovery of a corpse's decay may not have been sufficient to undermine the other evidence for their good life and importance to the community.

The question remains as to how widely the documentary tradition that has underlined this analysis was known and to what extent the same views influenced the five communities examined here in their encounters with corpses. The documents considered perhaps represent a narrow view of the decay of the corpse, being written by churchmen concerned for the fate of the soul. They do not reflect the many possible reasons for the deliberate re-engagement with corpses that can be seen in the archaeological evidence, nor the many possible uses to which the dead body might be put in the promotion of a community, family or individual's identity. What is clear though is that the archaeological and documentary evidence demonstrate the continued concern for the state of the body after death and that the corpse continued to exert an influence over middle and late Anglo-Saxon society.

Acknowledgements

The quote in the title of this chapter is taken from Bede, *HE* III.8, in reference to Æthelburh, daughter of King Anna of the East Angles and abbess of Faremoutiers-en-Brie: 'On opening her sepulchre they found her body as untouched by decay as it had also been immune from the corruption of fleshly desires.' Thanks are due to Emma-Jayne Graham, Edeltraud Aspöck and the anonymous reviewer for comments on drafts of this paper.

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- [*PSE*] Ælfric *The Passion of St Edmund* in Crossley-Holland 1984, 228–233
- [*TEdithae*] Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *Translatio Edithae* in Hollis 2004, 69–93
- [*VCA*] Anon *Vita sancti Cuthberti auctore anonymo* [The anonymous Life of Cuthbert] in Colgrave 1940
- [*VCP*] Bede *Vita sancti Cuthberti prosaica auctore Beda* [Bede's prose Life of Cuthbert] in Colgrave 1940
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FUNERARY AND POST-DEPOSITIONAL BODY TREATMENTS AT THE MIDDLE ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY WINNALL II: NORM, VARIETY – AND DEVIANCE?

Edeltraud Aspöck

Introduction

In this chapter I will present an analysis and discussion of norm, variety and deviance in burial and post-burial practices in early medieval England using the example of the middle Anglo-Saxon cemetery of Winnall II, Hampshire. The cemetery is located on the east bank of the River Itchen, across from the former Roman city of Winchester in southern England (Figure 5.1; Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 2–3). Winnall II can be classified as a community field cemetery and dates from the middle of the seventh to the beginning of the eighth century AD (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 50–55) possibly extending into the ninth. Excavations in the 1950s revealed a variety of graves with bodies buried in quite a dramatic manner: the skeletons of a child and two youths had been covered by large flint stones, another twisted adult body seemed to push against the grave wall and yet another one was lacking its skull. Evidence from two burials suggested the possible amputation of hands and in a few others the skeletons were in usual positions (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, i, 19). In Anglo-Saxon archaeology, evidence such as this is usually considered evidence of ‘deviant burial’ and is thought to reflect the mortuary treatment of social outcasts, such as criminals and suicide victims (*e.g.* Aspöck 2008, 2009; Buckberry 2008; Cherryson 2008; Geake 1992; Harman *et al.* 1981; Hayman and Reynolds 2005; Hirst 1985, 87; Reynolds 2002a; 2002b; 2003; 2009; Wilson 1992).

What is classified as deviant and what is considered normal in the archaeological mortuary record is frequently based on modern Western standards (Aspöck 2009 *passim*). In Anglo-Saxon archaeology, most often a ‘typological’ approach to the interpretation of ‘deviant burial’ is adopted. By this I mean that certain types of inhumation deposits – ‘deviant burial’ has rarely been applied to cremation graves – are categorised as such. Paradigmatic are prone and decapitated bodies, bodies covered with stones, bodies with

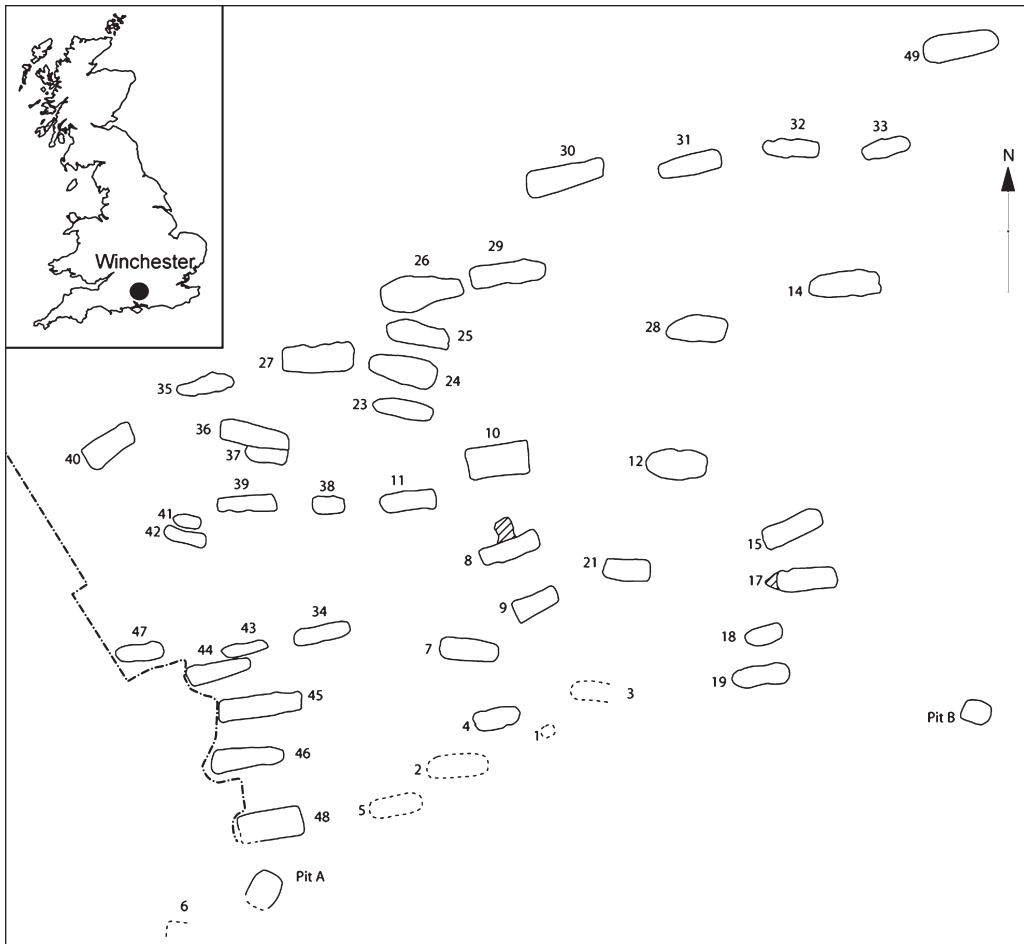


Figure 5.1. Location and cemetery plan, Winnall II (after Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 7).

amputated limbs (Reynolds 2009), bodies of people that appear to have been buried alive – the interpretation of these so-called ‘live-burials’ is controversial (see Hirst 1985, 38–43; 1993, 42–43; Reynolds 1988, 718) – crouched bodies, multiple, shallow and cramped burials (Hirst 1985; Wilson 1992, 71–72), and trepanned skulls (Härke 1992, 215). In all these cases ‘deviant burial’ evokes exclusively negative associations.

A less common way to investigate Anglo-Saxon ‘deviant burial’ has been contextual (Cherryson 2008; Pader 1982). As in the ‘typological’ approach, ‘deviant burial’ is also considered exceptional – *i.e.* small in number relative to what is perceived to be the norm. However, the contextual approach considers all the burial evidence from a cemetery, region or period. For Pader (1982, 41) ritual is normative because it mimics previous performances of that ritual. In her cemetery analysis, whatever dominates statistically is defined as the norm. As a result, the types of burials that are considered ‘deviant’ can look quite different

from one cemetery, region or period to another and would not always be considered non-normative by those following the 'typological' approach. Additionally, the contextual interpretation recognises 'positive' and 'negative' variants of deviancy.

Each approach has its advantages and disadvantages. The benefit of the 'typological' approach, for example, is that it allows the researcher to deal with large and complex data sets and thereby to create a bigger picture. This is exemplified by Andrew Reynolds' (2009) extensive analysis of types of deviant burials in their changing geographical contexts from the sixth to the sixteenth centuries AD that bridges the usual divide between the earlier and later Anglo-Saxon periods. Because Reynolds views the emergence of so called 'execution cemeteries' from the middle Anglo-Saxon period onwards as a manifestation of the growing juridical power of emerging Anglo-Saxon kings, the weight of his interpretation of 'deviant burial' falls on social categorizations implying the burial of social outcasts. Death-related 'deviances' of those who died as a result of illness, sudden death or suicide, *etc.* feature less prominently.

Both approaches to 'deviant burial' suffer from two weaknesses. The first is the dichotomy in the application of an expression such as 'deviant burial' consisting of two exclusive categories, normal (positive) and deviant (negative). The second weakness is a methodological one. I will address the problem of dichotomy first. As numerous ethnographic studies have shown, the funerary practices of any given society usually contain more than just the two categories of normal and deviant (Aspöck 2009, 58–101). After death has occurred, the survivors act based on a specific cultural tradition. Consequently, in any cultural context there are different 'norms' of funerary practices for different types of dead individuals. Mortuary practices usually vary according to age at death, gender, social position, social and ritual roles, types of death and circumstances of dying, *etc.* (Binford 1972). Relating to a society's ideas about the body and about death there may be multiple ways to bury a dead person which are not dichotomous categories but form a series of practices with meanings ranging from 'ideal' to 'improper'. Wherever they are on the scale, all these mortuary treatments follow a tradition determining what has to be done with dead individuals, including exceptional people or deaths. However, it is usually crucial that these mortuary traditions are followed and that each dead individual gets the 'right' mortuary treatment.

What people may have considered the 'normal' thing to do at death, how to treat the corpse, whether and how to bury human remains at some stage, also potentially varies between neighbouring communities (Aspöck 2009 *passim*). More often however, certain mortuary practices may be outlined as typical for a region and period, with smaller variations between communities and cemeteries manifesting local symbolism in burial practices. Repetition of the traditional mortuary behaviour may include variations and changes, usually on a smaller scale, which over time can amount to larger changes. Political, social and religious transformations have their impact on burial practices and sudden shifts in power may even lead to abrupt changes. In the Anglo-Saxon context, the increasing social differentiation, the emergence of Christianity and the establishment of royal dynasties provided a backdrop for the changes in mortuary behavior including variation in burial practices and places witnessed during the middle of the period. As well as furnished community field cemeteries we find unfurnished cemeteries and a series of 'minority'

burial places (churchyards, high status barrows, isolated places and execution cemeteries; Buckberry and Cherryson 2010; Cherryson 2008; Geake 1992; Hayman and Reynolds 2005; Lucy 2000, 181–186; Lucy and Reynolds 2002, 12–15; Reynolds 2002a; 2002b; 2009). Cherryson's (2008) contextual investigation of mortuary practices in Later Saxon Wessex found that the definition of what may be 'normal' was less straightforward than expected. Next to 'deviant' execution cemeteries there were various other places acceptable for burial, which seem to have been used for some time. A growing number of isolated burials form a heterogeneous group where each case needs to be discussed individually. She concludes that archaeologists' definition of what was normal in the Anglo-Saxon period may have been too narrow (Cherryson 2008, 127).

The other problem, one whose importance must not be underestimated, is methodological. With the exception of the above mentioned controversial 'live-burials', archaeologists usually work from the premise that 'deviant burial' reflects the deposition of a corpse soon after death. Post-burial manipulations are usually not inherent in the concept, which poses some serious problems. As a matter of fact, mortuary deposits can result from sometimes entirely unrelated events that can take place between the death of an individual and the recovery of the human remains by an archaeologist (Weiss-Krejci 2011, 70). Burials and their disturbance can be the direct outcome of funerary rites, but non-funerary events also might leave traces in the archaeological evidence. On a global scale the latter probably represent a much more common factor than might be expected. One example for a type of post-funeral intervention is provided by Jack Goody. Among the LoDagaa of Ghana there exists a belief that if burial rules are not followed properly this might result in misfortune affecting the whole community. In one case, bad weather is attributed to the inappropriate funerary treatment of a man. In order to end the bad weather the corpse has to be removed from its original position and be buried with outsiders (Goody 1962, 151–152). In pre-industrial – and possibly even some modern – societies, the power of superstitions in both funerary and post-funeral rituals must not be underestimated (see Weiss-Krejci 2013, 287).

In order to truly understand the mortuary record of any given society a more holistic approach is called for. Such an approach was developed in my thesis (Aspöck 2009). Analysing the variety of mortuary traditions in Winchester and its surroundings from the Late Iron Age to the Anglo-Saxon period, I combined the investigation of individual sites with long-term trends such as archaeological visibility of mortuary practices (number of burials per period) and variation in mortuary behaviour (types of mortuary treatments and burial places). Not only 'burial evidence' from cemeteries but all human remains from sites within an area of 10km around Winchester dating to this time period – including undated evidence – were taken into account. The 1950s excavation results from the Winnall II cemetery (Meaney and Hawkes 1970) provide the opportunity for a demonstration concerning one aspect of my approach, the contextual analysis of burial norms in cemeteries.

Because the cemetery of Winnall II was only partly published (with only a few grave plans), I consulted the original documentation in the Winchester Archives (Winchester Historic Resources Centre, Accession number ARCH1416; Aspöck 2011, 313–318). Sensitised for the possibility of grave-reopening from my previous research on a sixth-

century AD cemetery in Austria, where all graves had been reopened and ‘robbed’ (Aspöck 2005; 2011, 300–313), I found a series of features in the Winnall II record typical for graves that have been re-opened. As I will later demonstrate in detail, my reanalysis of the Winnall II graves suggests that some graves were reopened during the Anglo-Saxon period, sometimes very soon after burial (Aspöck 2009, 190–212; 2011, 315–319). Hence, some alleged ‘deviant burials’ described at the beginning of this chapter might reflect post-burial manipulations of graves and bodies.

The Anglo Saxon community field cemetery Winnall II

As already mentioned in the introduction, Winnall II is a community field cemetery that, based on artefacts, has been dated from the middle of the seventh to the beginning of the eighth century AD (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 33–49). However, the possibility has to be taken into account that Winnall II was still in use in the ninth century AD. Radiocarbon dates from similar middle Anglo-Saxon cemeteries have proven continued use of these types of cemeteries into the late Anglo-Saxon period (Cherryson 2008, 118–119).

At Winnall II, 45 graves were excavated. Excavations only revealed the eastern borders of the cemetery and it was assumed by the excavators that burial extended further to the west (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 7; see Figure 5.1). After preliminary assessment of the human remains in the 1960s, published in the cemetery report (Meaney and Hawkes 1970), there have been different re-investigations which revealed partly conflicting results. The basis for my analysis is the assessment by Gowland (2002), who identified 12 immature and 36 adult individuals. The proportion of the sexes is about equal and amounts to 18 females (including 3 probably female) and 17 males (including 2 probably male). Based on these results, the distribution of age at death and sex at the cemetery suggests that, except for infants – Gowland (2002) identified no infant remains – all ages and both sexes of a rural community were deemed eligible to be buried there (Aspöck 2009, 202). This may, however, relate to the curation of the skeletal material. A previous assessment mentions 1 or possibly even 3 foeti/neonates together with adult remains (graves 46 and possibly graves 7 and 41; Brothwell *et al.* n.d.). In any case, even if some of the newborns were buried at this cemetery, it was surely an exception. The majority of infants were treated and disposed of in a different way. Early and middle Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in general show a conspicuous absence of infants; the survival of infant skeletons is lower than in the Roman and later Anglo-Saxon periods and can therefore not be attributed solely to issues of preservation (Gowland 2002, 189–200; Hadley 2010, 108–109). The proportion of children in early and middle Anglo-Saxon cemeteries has been shown to rise sharply after 1 year of age and then remains relatively stable throughout childhood (Gowland 2002, 189–200; Hadley 2010, 108–109). Around one year therefore may have been a threshold, possibly related to some (ritual) events in the life course after which burial norms for infants changed. Outside the Winchester area, some infants and young children have been found buried in settlement contexts, which seems to have been another acceptable way of disposal of the very young (Crawford 1999; 2007; Hamerow 2006).

The graves at Winnall II were laid out on a west-east alignment (Figure 5.1). All but two graves are single graves (not counting the neonates mentioned above). One double grave contains the remains of two adults (grave 1) and the bodies of a child and a youth were buried in grave 24. Except for grave 11, all bodies were found with the heads to the west. Usually the bodies were placed on their back (except for 11 and 24) and in most graves the legs were straight. This burial practice is typical for the middle Anglo-Saxon period (Boddington 1990, 181; Geake 1997; Hyslop 1963; Lethbridge 1931, 47–70) and can also be seen in community cemeteries of the later period (Cherryson 2008). Arm positions show huge variation and, as already mentioned in the introduction, some graves display additional features that make Winnall II graves appear unusual and typologically ‘deviant’. These features include large flints placed on bodies (graves 24 and 25), unusual body positions (*e.g.* graves 7, 11, 17, 23, 24) and missing body parts (graves 23, 43, 46).

Taphonomy and post-depositional disturbance

The appearance of human remains when excavated will always be different from their appearance immediately after the original burial. After deposition in the ground a series of natural processes take place, which will alter the body of the deceased (Duday 2009). In addition, human interference can occur. The reopening of graves may considerably change the evidence (Aspöck 2005; 2011). The distinction between post-depositional disturbances and patterns that are the result of funerary acts is the precondition for understanding mortuary behaviour. Post-interment disturbance has been widely underestimated, but in the following I will show why post-depositional processes may account for most of the unusual body positions and missing body parts at this cemetery. Just a small number of past disturbances of graves were observed at the time of excavation, *e.g.* grave 46 with the ‘amputated hands’ (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 19).

At Winnall II, three separate lines of evidence may lead to the conclusion that a grave has been the subject of ancient disturbance. These are: indirect evidence of intervention pits; bone from other individuals; and non-anatomical positioning of human remains or unusual positioning of the body or of the grave goods (Table 5.1).

Indirect evidence of intervention pits

Unfortunately at Winnall II no intervention pits were recorded. This does not mean that they did not exist. Pits are not always visible in the archaeological record (Aspöck 2005). Taken on its own, this would considerably weaken the argument for grave reopening. However, there are other factors that support the reopening of the graves and the existence of intervention pits. Thirty-four out of the 45 excavated graves at Winnall II contained ceramic fragments, charcoal, parts of grave furnishings, human and animal bone, glass fragments, slate, brick fragments, iron nails and snail shells in the grave fill. The ceramic fragments include prehistoric, Roman and modern pieces (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 21). The excavators originally interpreted all finds as re-deposited into the graves through

Grave No.	Finds in grave-fill, grave cut	Bone from other individuals	Position of bone and grave goods, bone preservation (plan)	Comments	Indications for ancient reopening
7	Small piece of spirally coiled bronze strip.	<i>fetus?</i> (Brothwell <i>et al.</i> n.d., table 1); <i>ulna of other individual?</i> (Groot n.d., 4).	No grave drawing, description: Skeleton askew in grave; skull crushed; only 1 bone of left hand preserved.	Grave goods include small bronze pin and pair of bronze wire rings.	Strong
10	Scattered potsherds; bones found in criss-cross arrangement near top of filling; silver pin, rings, bronze tag all found in various depth in grave fill in W half of grave; grave cut very wide and shallow.	Only adult skeleton, unsexed (Gowland 2002); Skeleton sexed female in all other reports (<i>e.g.</i> Brothwell <i>et al.</i> n.d., table 1; comment that skull masculine – seems that 2 individuals were mixed up (Groot n.d., 4).	Skull crushed and most ribs missing, left leg and right leg below knee displaced; all grave goods dislocated.	‘Considerable later disturbance (by plough?)’ noted by excavator; grave very shallow (11 in).	Ancient reopening
11	Tiny bit of glass near skull, animal tooth.		Contorted body position: upper body on left side, with hands over head, right knee under left leg; two top vertebrae were dislocated (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, fig. 7) but grave goods seem to be in original position.	Considered to have been decapitated (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 30–31).	Some
15	Piece of burnt bone, some slate and scattered potsherds.		Skull shattered; legs appear unusually bent with feet close together.		Some
23	Brick fragment.		Decapitated; leg position turned to right; arms bent, hands at shoulder.	Coffin nails/fittings?	Some
24	A few potsherds and frog-bones at head and feet; large flints over heads.		Not very well preserved and skulls smashed (flints on skulls)	Skeleton badly preserved	Probably not reopened

Grave No.	Finds in grave-fill, grave cut	Bone from other individuals	Position of bone and grave goods, bone preservation (plan)	Comments	Indications for ancient reopening
25	Charcoal, pyrites, animal bones; heavy flints over skeleton.		Arm position above head.	Charcoal between arms and left side of grave could be remains of coffin; skeleton poorly preserved.	Some
34	Deposit of charcoal and small potsherds 3.65 ft from W end, 16 in from N side; 2 flints at head of grave.		Legs bent.		Some
35	Few flints and pottery; some snail shells; grave cut of irregular shape.		Well preserved, but left hand missing.		Some
46	Large potsherds, charcoal, snail shells, iron rivet.		Bones of middle of body disturbed.	Well preserved, skull complete.	Ancient reopening
48	Large flints, some on top of skeleton; 2 iron nails, snail shells, potsherds, lump of brick, horse tooth; gully-like depression at foot end of grave.		Only right upper arm, some right ribs, lower vertebrae, pelvis and right upper leg in position.	Poorly preserved.	Some/ definitely modern disturbance
49	Potsherds, snail shells, slate, pot-boilers.	Bone of a second adult individual (female) identified (Gowland 2002, appx 2, A.2.1.2)		Fairly well preserved; skull much disturbed and displaced.	Some

Table 1. Evidence for the reopening of graves at Winnall II.

‘worms and small burrowing animals’ (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 21) from medieval times onwards. I found that accumulations of specific types of finds, such as snail shells, redeposited ceramics from mainly earlier periods and parts of grave furnishings and human bone are frequently found in the grave-fill of reopened graves (Aspöck 2005, 253–256; 2011, 309). This is because after a grave has been reopened some kind of pit will usually remain on the surface. The depth of the pit will depend on whether the grave has been entirely or partly refilled or not refilled at all. If it has not been refilled, the intervention pit will gradually refill through natural processes. If the pit has been partly or completely refilled by humans the soil of the re-fill will be less compact than the soil of the surrounding older grave fill. A process of gradual subsiding will set in, which can be noticed during scientific excavation. In a previous study of a sixth-century AD cemetery at Brunn am Gebirge, Austria, I detected snail shells in association with human bone in the upper parts of intervention pits. The snail shells belong to snail types that do not bury themselves deeply in the ground. Hence, they can serve as markers for ancient grave disturbance (Aspöck 2005, 254). Twelve graves at Winnall II also contained snail shells in the fill.

Bone from other individuals

During the reopening of graves, artefacts older or contemporary to the reopening may also be deposited in the grave – accidentally or intentionally – including the bones of other individuals (e.g. Aspöck 2005, 304). The preliminary osteological results published so far report nothing unusual about the skeletal evidence (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 20). Skeletal reports in the Winchester Archives (ARCH1416) however, refer to mixed skeletal remains. One of the reports describes that skeletal remains ‘were received in a disturbed and mixed condition, no doubt due to disturbances prior to excavation’ (Brothwell *et al.* n.d., 2). There was no information which individuals were found in ‘mixed condition’. Brothwell *et al.* (n.d.) report that as part of the examination the mixed bones were separated and sorted by individual. Recent re-analyses of the Winnall II human remains provide evidence for additional bones in double grave 49 (Gowland 2002, Appendix 2, A.2.1.2) and in graves 7 and 10 (Groot n.d., 4).

Unusual positioning of the body or of the grave goods

Finally, when graves are reopened this will alter the positioning of bones and grave goods. If the corpse has decomposed, the reopening may lead to significant disturbance of the anatomical position of the skeletal remains (e.g. Aspöck 2005; 2011, 300–313). On the other hand, if graves were reopened very soon after burial, before the onset of advanced decomposition, corpses may have been moved in the graves or out of the graves without disintegrating, which may have resulted in unusual body positions, such as those found in many Winnall II graves. However, dislocation and absence of individual bone also occurs as part of natural variations in the decomposition of the corpse (e.g. Duday 2009; Mant 1987; Roksandic 2002, 103–109) and therefore this type of evidence is often ambiguous.

Features typical of Anglo-Saxon reopening	Grave numbers
None (undisturbed)	8, 14, 17, 21, 28, 44, 47
Very few (may be undisturbed)	18, 30, 37, 38, 41, 43
Some (may be reopened)	7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 40, 42, 45, 48, 49
Some (may be reopened; or modern disturbance)	3, 4, 19
Strong (definitely reopened)	10, 46
Modern disturbance	1, 2, 5, 6, 27, 39, 48

Table 2. Evaluation of features indicating grave reopening at Winnall II. Grave 48 appears twice as it shows signs of both modern and ancient disturbance.

Making sense of Winnall II

After an evaluation of the above features I ranked the 45 Winnall II graves according to the likeliness of ancient reopening (Table 5.2). Twenty-six graves at Winnall II were either certainly or possibly reopened in antiquity (in most cases however, the evidence for reopening is ambiguous). Six graves were disturbed in modern times in the course of construction work. To these one must add grave 48, which was not only reopened during the Anglo-Saxon period, but also shows signs of modern disturbance (and therefore appears twice in Table 5.2). Seven graves did not show any evidence for post-depositional intervention and a further six graves were probably undisturbed too.

In the following I will discuss 39 Winnall II graves. Those six that have been disturbed in modern times only are not included in this discussion. I will start with the group of 13 graves which show no signs of having been reopened. These graves form the basis for my analysis of norms of funerary behaviour at the cemetery. Those elements of burial practice(s) which are repeated for the majority of graves I consider to be the main burial practice at Winnall II (Table 5.3). This part of the analysis was inspired by the discussion of burial norms in Mesolithic burials (Nilsson Stutz 2003, 324–328; Aspöck 2009, 110–119). Correlations in burial data will be identified which further describe the common burial practices. As I will show, 9 of the 13 undisturbed burials display certain common elements in practice, whereas 4 differ from the usual burial practice. As a next step, I will examine these 4 burials on an individual basis. Then I will turn to the 26 graves which are or may be anciently disturbed. Again these graves can be divided into two distinct groups: 24 graves show evidence possibly resulting from post-mortem interventions that took place not long after death whereas two graves were disturbed long after the body had decomposed. Among the graves that have been disturbed soon after burial, seven show patterns that point to post-depositional manipulations of the corpses.

Establishing funerary patterns: undisturbed graves (n=9)

Unfortunately, the number of graves at Winnall II with little or no evidence for human disturbance is low (Table 5.2). However, the following funerary patterns can be observed

in a majority of 9 graves (Table 5.3). Deposition of the corpse seems to have taken place soon after death and before the onset of advanced decomposition because the skeletal remains were found in anatomical position. (Nothing suggests that Anglo-Saxons practiced artificial mummification in which case the body could have stayed in anatomical order for prolonged periods of time; see Weiss-Krejci 2011, 72). A place for the grave was chosen within the cemetery area and the clustering of graves suggests that the choice of grave location was not made at random. Age at death was certainly a factor when selecting a place, as children and youths were found buried next to each other (graves 9 and 21; 18 and 19; 24 and 25; 41 and 42). Other factors may have included kinship ties (Reynolds 2009, 201; Sayer 2007). A separate grave-pit was dug for each individual adult. Double graves usually include neonates or children buried with adults or other children (a practice common for the early and middle Anglo-Saxon period; Härke 1997, 127). The grave-pit was dug aligned west-east and rectangular to oval in shape. The sizes of the graves vary in relation to the size of the corpse. (Some graves exhibit indirect evidence that bodies were placed in coffins or other organic containers – see below, graves 18, 24, 25 and 46.) The graves were dug large enough so that there was ample space to accommodate the body. The complete and dressed corpse (evidenced by finds of costume fittings) was laid into the grave on its back with its legs straight. The head rested in the west end of the grave-pit.

Proportions of age at death and sexes of the individuals from the undisturbed graves are similar to the whole cemetery, with only the proportion of immature individuals being twice as high (5 graves). However, only about a third of the undisturbed graves contained non-perishable grave goods *e.g.* tools such as iron knives (compared to 80% of the possibly disturbed graves). Two out of only three graves with objects made of precious metal are undisturbed (graves 8 and 21). Grave 8 contained silver pins linked by a silver chain and two small bronze penannular brooches (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 24, fig. 9). Because of their small number, no significant correlations in burial data of the undisturbed graves

Burial practice	Frequency
The whole corpse was buried while fleshed	Probably 100%
A place within the cemetery area was chosen for the grave	100% of the excavated graves
A separate grave pit was dug for each adult/mature individual	Probably 100%
A rectangular to oval-shaped grave pit, aligned W–E, sized to accommodate the corpse, was dug	93.9%
The corpse was laid in the grave so that the head was in the W facing E	Probably 100%
The corpse was positioned in the grave on its back	98%
The corpse was laid out with the legs predominantly straight	At least 78.9% (position of the arms more varied)
The burials were covered with either chalky – or chalk rubble – material or earthy/humus material. Both materials occurred with or without flints	89%

Table 3. The main burial practice at Winnall II: the practices repeated for the majority of undisturbed graves.

can be identified. However, if we look at the disturbed and undisturbed graves together they reveal burial patterns typical for that time, such as types of grave goods depending on age at death and gender (Boddington 1990, 181; Geake 1997; Hyslop 1963; Lethbridge 1931, 47–70). There were no obvious differences between the graves which would suggest changes in the main burial practice. The tradition of digging west-east aligned pits to bury the dead and the deposition of the corpse with age- and gender-specific grave goods was repeated without obvious alterations. Some variations, such as provision with precious metals (graves 8, 10, 21) are most likely related to different families or subgroups using the cemetery (Aspöck 2009, 197–198).

Undisturbed burials diverging from the main patterns (n = 4)

From a contextual perspective, the undisturbed graves 14, 17, 28 and possibly child grave 18 differ from the burial practice outlined above (Table 5.4). Graves 14, 17 and 28 differ in more than one feature: they were in a marginal position (Figure 5.2); graves 14 and 28 had a hard and compact grave fill; graves 17 and 28 were too small for the bodies they held; grave 28 was irregular in shape; and grave 17 contained a body that was laid out flexed on its side.

A 17- to 18-year-old man was buried without preserved grave goods in irregularly-shaped grave 28 (Figure 5.2), which was dug much too small so that the skeleton had ‘head and feet forced up at [the] ends’ (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 16). The grave had a clayey grave

Grave no.	Human intervention	Sex	Age at death	Different burial practice
7	potentially	Female	25–34	Body lying in the grave, ‘askew’.
11	potentially	Female	25–34	Contorted, unnatural body position; head to E of grave.
14	no	Female	20–25	Grave fill ‘strikingly hard and tightly compacted’; marginal position.
17	no	Male	30	Too short grave pit; body lying on the side with legs flexed; marginal position.
18	no(?)	Immature	1–3	Large flint beside legs, originally deposited on top of body/coffin? Marginal position.
23	potentially	Male	25–34	Body decapitated, legs bent to side, left leg lying over right one.
24	potentially	Immature Immature	13–17, 4–7	Large flints cover head end of grave; child lying on right side, arms bent double with hands on shoulders.
25	potentially	Female?	13–17	Torso covered with large flints, more large flints beside legs, originally deposited on top of body/ coffin? Arms positioned above the head, left arm seems dislocated.
28	no	Male	17–18	Grave pit irregular in shape and too small; skeleton had head and feet forced up at the ends; clayey, hard and compacted grave fill.

Table 4. Winnall II graves with features that diverge from the main burial practices.

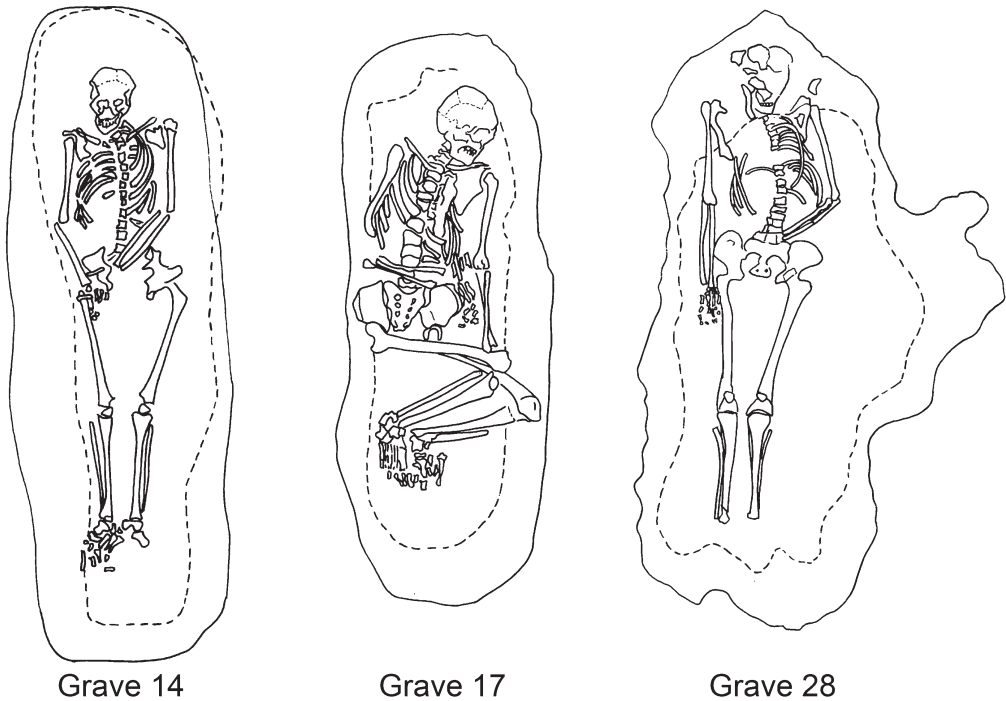


Figure 5.2. Winnall II, grave 14, 17, 28.

fill, described as ‘hard and compacted’ (*ibid.*) and charcoal was found beneath the skeleton. The grave was rather isolated (Figure 5.1). Closest was grave 14 (Figure 5.2), which held the skeleton of a 20–25-year-old woman. Her body was laid out in a regular position, and the grave fill was also described as strikingly hard and tightly packed (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 13). It appears that special effort went into sealing these two graves and the soil may even have been brought purposefully from elsewhere to fill the graves. Additionally, the marginal position of both graves highlights that there were different rules for those burials.

Grave 17 contained the remains of a man aged around 30 who was buried lying on his left side with his legs flexed in a pit too short for his size (Figure 5.2). There were no grave goods and it was the only flexed burial in the cemetery. An extension-like pit dug at the west end of the grave (Figure 5.1) was interpreted in the original report as an attempt to enlarge the grave (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 13). It seems unlikely that this pit had anything to do with an attempt to reopen this grave as otherwise there are no signs of disturbance (Table 5.1). Conventionally, in Anglo-Saxon burial studies the label ‘deviant’ is rarely applied to burials in too small grave-pits – so-called ‘crouched’ or ‘cramped’ burials (*e.g.* Reynolds 2009; exceptions are Hirst 1985; Wilson 1992, 71–72) and graves with special grave fill. So what caused these differences in burial norms? Too small grave-pits, *i.e.* grave-pits sized for children (in particular grave 17) could symbolise non-adult

social status. For example, later Anglo-Saxon law indicates loss of adult status for mentally and physically impaired individuals (Crawford 2010, 95). However, the identity of such adult individuals, for example disabled persons, may not necessarily have been perceived negatively (Crawford 2010; Hadley 2010). So, if this is the case, we have an example for a different burial norm associated with an ambivalent meaning.

The fourth possibly undisturbed burial diverging from the regular pattern is grave 18. It was also found on the eastern fringes of the cemetery, between undisturbed child grave 19 and the already discussed grave 17 (Figure 5.1). The poor preservation of the 1–3-year-old infant in grave 18 makes it impossible to exclude post-burial intervention, despite there being hardly any positive evidence. The grave was shallow and the body was buried according to the main burial practice. A large flint was found next to the legs and a smaller flint above the feet. It is possible that the position of the flints changed during the decay processes. The large flint may initially have been placed on top of the body or on a coffin or other organic container changing position upon collapse during processes of decay (traces of ‘charcoal’ were found in the grave, possibly the remains of wood?). Bodies covered with large stones are categorised as ‘deviant burials’ (Reynolds 2009) and, also from a contextual perspective, the deposition of large flints may be interpreted as a special effort to seal the grave.

Graves possibly reopened soon after burial (no = 24)

After having discussed the main burial patterns in 9 undisturbed graves at Winnall II and 4 graves that do not follow those patterns, let’s turn to a group of 24 graves, which display some features typical for ancient grave reopening. These graves *may* have been reopened after burial although, in many cases, the evidence is ambiguous or only weak (Table 5.1). The graves discussed in this section would have been reopened before the onset of advanced decay of the body, at a stage when the body was still articulated and could be moved around in the grave without disintegrating. However, this leaves us without one of the most definite indicators of grave-reopening, which is a significant disturbance of the anatomical position of human bone (see grave 10 and 46 below). I will now discuss a selection of these graves, those with unusual body positions (more examples in Table 5.1).

Despite having probably been reopened, 17 graves show nothing unusual with regard to the regular Winnall II burial practices outlined above. Frequently, dislocations of individual bone or body parts are visible, most likely caused by natural post-depositional processes of decay. So, it is not obvious from the archaeological evidence what the reason for the reopening could have been. For example, in grave 34, a deposit of charcoal and small potsherds was found in the grave fill just above the leg of an adult male (Aspöck 2011, 317). The grave is likely to have been reopened in the leg area with the legs shifted aside. The deposit thus indicates the bottom of the reopening pit.

On the other hand, five of the possibly reopened graves are different from the main burial practice outlined above (Table 5.4). These are graves 11, 23, 24, 25 (Figures 5.3 and 5.4) and possibly grave 7. Grave 7 contained the remains of an adult female (and possibly other individuals, Table 5.1). The description of grave 7 says that the skeleton of the woman was lying in the grave ‘askew’ – but unfortunately there is no grave plan to verify this.

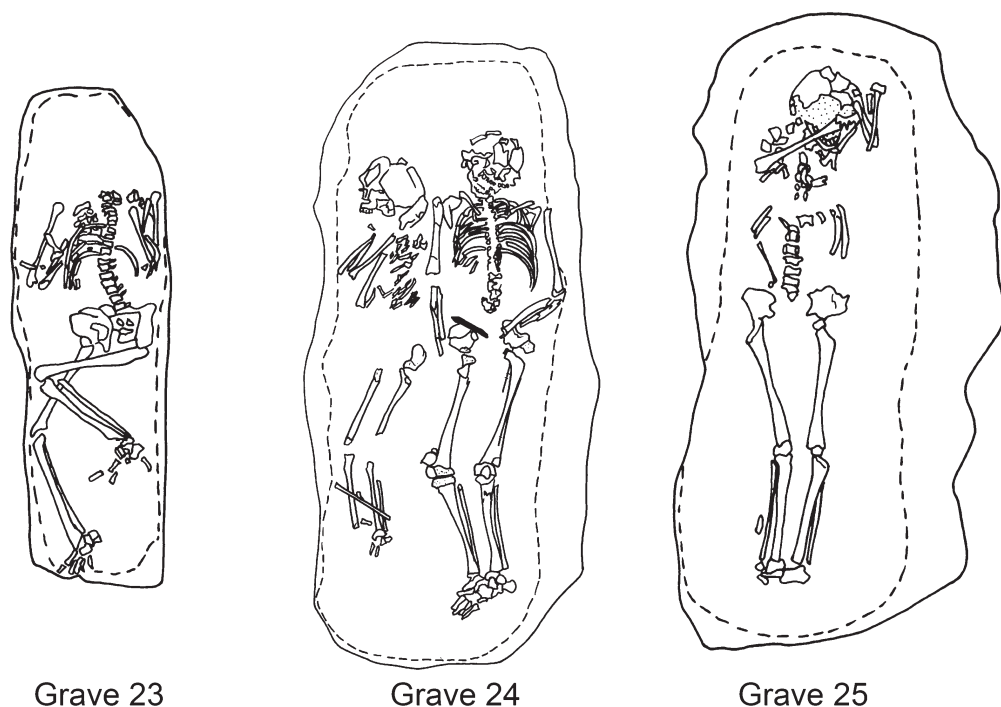


Figure 5.3. Winnall II, grave 23, 24, 25.

In grave 11, the body of an adult female was found in a contorted, unnatural position and with the head to the east – the only burial oriented that way (Figure 5.4). The legs were crossed at the thigh and the upper body was twisted and lying on the side with both arms raised in front of the head. The top cervical vertebra of the body was displaced in front of the teeth and the second vertebra was also not in place (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 12). Hence, this burial is listed as a ‘decapitated burial’ (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 15). The grave may have been reopened and the body turned in the grave or it was moved out of the grave and deposited back in the grave, either without paying attention to the position of the body or deliberately positioning the body in that contorted way. Alternatively, dislocation of vertebrae can happen naturally in the process of disarticulation (disarticulation of the first and second cervical vertebrae occurs early in the sequence of disarticulation; Roksandic 2002, 102) or manipulation of the corpse took place after onset of decomposition. An argument against the interpretation of reopening is the position of the knife, whorl and comb in the shoulder and head area. These grave goods appear in these positions in other graves too, which would mean that this is the original position of the body in this grave.

The adult male body in grave 23 (Figure 5.3) was found without the skull. The top cervical vertebra was located at the left shoulder. The body rested in an unusual and twisted position: the arms were bent double and the legs were bent to the side, the left leg lying over the right

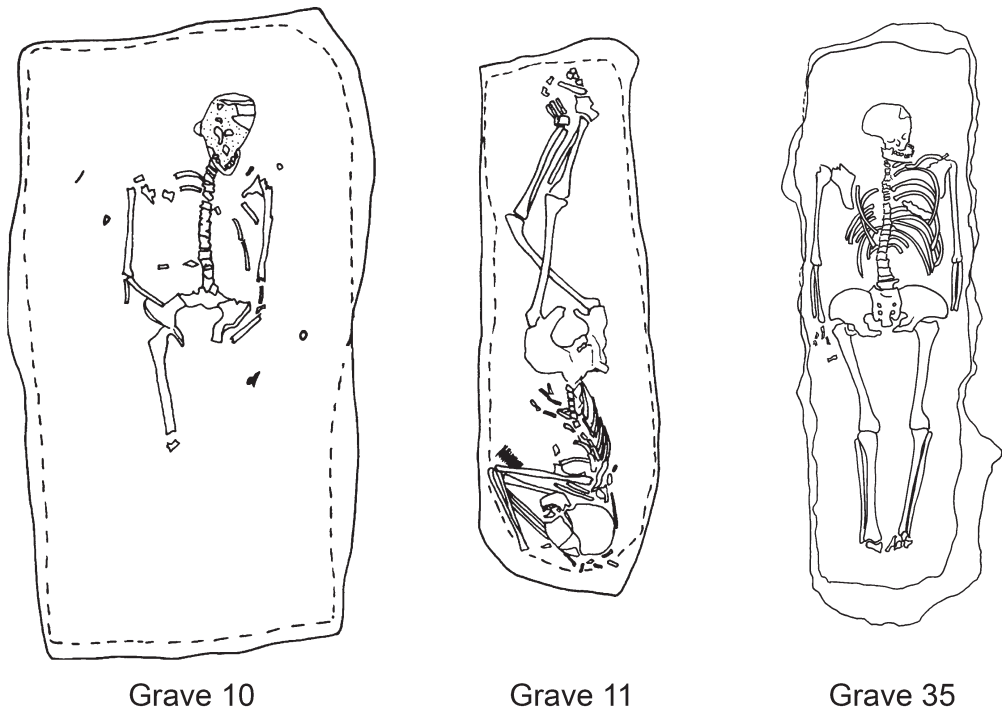


Figure 5.4. Winnall II, grave 10, 11, 35.

leg. The vertebrae in Grave 23 did not show any signs of cuts or other man-made damage (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 15) which could result from post-depositional decapitation after the onset of decomposition of the corpse, when the head could be removed more easily. Maybe the body was moved out of the grave for decapitation and afterwards deposited back in the grave less carefully. Or, perhaps, the legs were shifted aside, so that somebody could find space to stand in the grave, since the cut of the grave pit was very narrow.

Very large, heavy flints covered the bodies buried in graves 24 and 25 (Figure 5.3; Meaney and Hawkes 1970, i). In grave 24, the body of a child (aged 4–7) and a youth (13–17 years old) were found buried underneath these flints. The child was lying on the right side and had the arms bent double with the hands on the shoulders. In grave 25 the body of another youth (aged 13–17 years, possibly female), also buried underneath large flints, had the arms positioned above the head in an unnatural position (Figure 5.3). Indications for post-depositional interference are weak, but because of the poor preservation of graves 24 and 25 and some finds in the grave fill it cannot be completely excluded. The unusual arm position of the body in grave 25 may alternatively result from pulling the body by the arms during post-depositional intervention (Figure 5.3). The excavators report charcoal between the arms and the left side of the grave – it may well be that these were the residues of a coffin. If there was a coffin, the large flints may have originally been placed on top of

the coffin. The collapse of the coffin would have caused the flints to change their position and possibly that is why in the leg-area they were at the side of the skeleton (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, i). Movement of flints may also have caused shifting and breakage of arm bones (Figure 5.3). There may also have been a coffin in grave 24, as the right fibula of the child was dislocated in a way that suggests that there was a hollow space. If the grave was re-opened when the coffin was still intact, this would have left very few traces in the grave, so that these two cases (graves 24 and 25) remain uncertain.

Graves 43 and 35 (Figure 5.4) do not stand out because of the burial practice employed, but I will discuss them here because (like grave 46, see below) they have been categorised as ‘amputated burial’ – a type of Anglo-Saxon deviant burial (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 17, 19; Reynolds 2009, 85, who had his doubts). The plan of grave 43 shows that from the adult female body very little – mainly long bones – was preserved. Not only was one hand missing, but the other hand had very few bones preserved and the bones of both feet seem to be missing too (Aspöck 2009, fig. 7.3.19). Grave 35 does not seem to be very well preserved either (Figure 5.4). Hence, I reinterpret the evidence for missing hands as evidence for poor preservation (grave 43), possibly (grave 35) or certainly (grave 46, see below) related to grave-reopening and consequent taphonomic factors.

Intentional depositions of smaller flint and amulets were found in many of these graves (Figure 5.5). Flints the size of a large fist were reported in 6 graves (9, 11, 12, 33, 34, 48). In the Winchester area, flint is part of the natural subsoil, but these flints seem to have been placed intentionally: firstly, depositions of large flints were documented by the excavators (only the grave fill of grave 48 was described as containing high amounts of natural flint, making this a more uncertain case); secondly, there is a pattern to it: flints were only found with bodies of women and immature individuals and mainly in the leg area. Items, which could be categorised as talismans or amulets (Meaney 1981) however, were found with all sexes and age groups, tooth of a horse or other undetermined animal teeth (graves 10, 11, 48, 49), undetermined animal bone (25 and 39), and frog bones (24 and 26). Other objects which may also have been provided as amulets are an iron pyrite in grave 3 and the glass fragment in grave 7. Of the undisturbed graves, only grave 8 contained such objects: flint and a pig’s canine tooth (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 24, fig. 9).

Graves reopened when the body was already fully decomposed (n = 2)

Two graves (graves 10 and 46) were undoubtedly reopened at a time when the body was already completely decomposed, but when there were probably still hollow spaces in the grave (Aspöck 2011, 318). This means disturbance occurred at a later point than with the above graves, but before the grave ‘collapsed’, *e.g.* within a decade after burial. In grave 10 (Figure 5.4), the grave pit was unusually wide, which could be a result of re-excavating the burial. An osteological report suggests that this grave contained elements from two individuals: the skull was assessed as masculine while the postcranial bone was considered rather small and fragile (Groot n.d., 13) – in the assessment by Gowland (2002) this is the only mature individual that remains unsexed (the grave goods are typical for a female grave though, see below). This evidence needs to be treated with caution, but could indicate a case

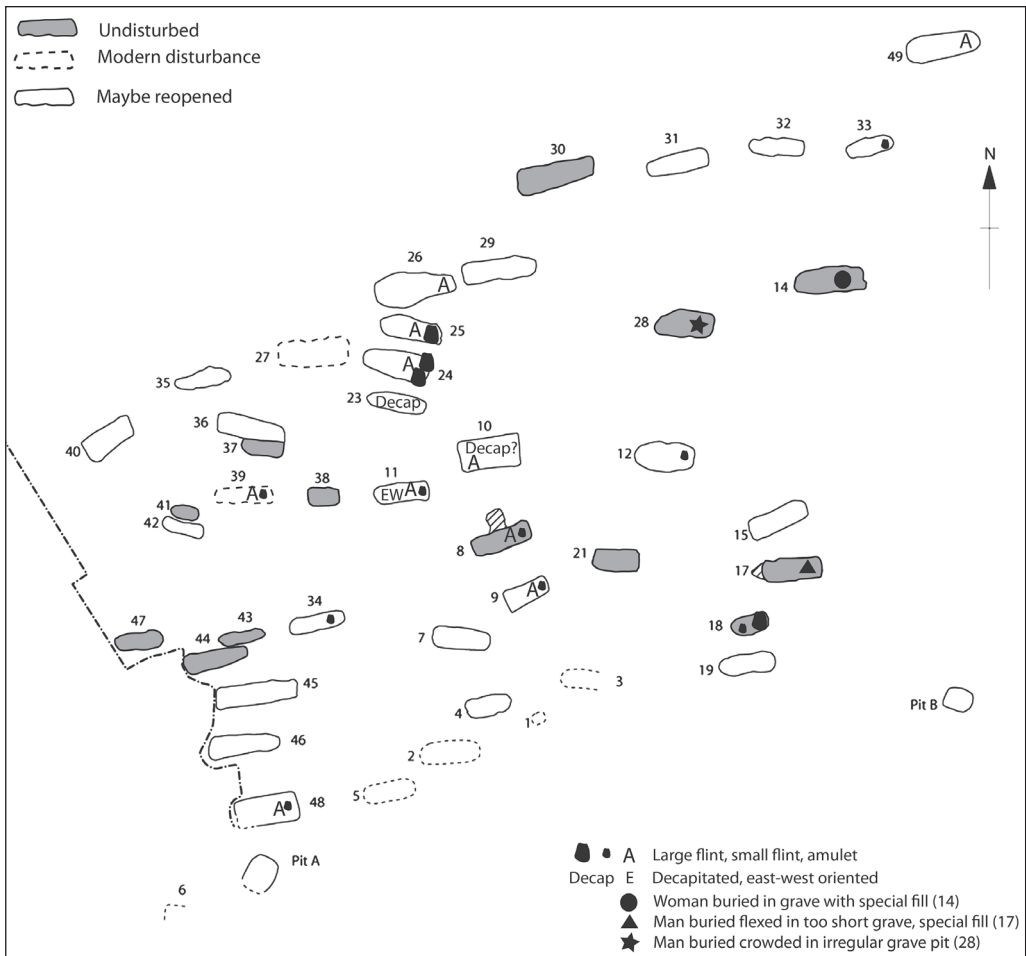


Figure 5.5. Winnall II, disturbances, different burial practices, post-depositional practices and depositions of flints and amulets.

of post-depositional decapitation. However, the grave plan shows that the skull was found in the anatomically correct position (Figure 5.4). Human bone was shifted individually in the grave and there was evidence for disturbance in the area of the legs – human bone and grave goods appeared at various depths in the grave fill. The reopening and manipulation of grave 46 targeted the area from below the chest to the knees (Aspöck 2011, 318, fig. 13; Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 19). Femora, pelvis bones and scapula were found mingled and partly covered the torso. The bone was still intact which indicates a hollow space to shift the bone around. Alternatively, the grave filling was not very compact. The disturbance covered the area of the right hand and may have caused accelerated decay of the bone and be the reason why the right hand was missing, or the right hand may have been taken out when the grave was reopened.

Discussion

Proceeding on the basis that at Winnall II we have a series of different types of funerary practices and post-depositional interventions including body manipulations and possibly depositions of objects but also grave-reopening with no particular outcome (or at least none that is visible archaeologically), we should ask how all these practices might relate to each other. I suggest seeing the post-depositional and some of the funerary practices at Winnall II in a dialectic relationship with similar ends.

The time period soon after death is characterised by fears that something may go wrong with the passage of the dead (*e.g.* van Gennep 1960 [1908]). Phenomena emerging from these fears are ideas about the dead person appearing amongst the living, often acting in a malicious way. Although the belief in revenants as an explanation for strange mortuary behaviour has been somewhat overstretched recently, it perfectly applies to graves reopened soon after burial. Anyone can become a revenant – although some types of people such as suicides, murder victims, alcoholics, *etc.*, run a higher risk. Commonly, unusual deaths in the community such as accidents, unforeseen deaths and especially deaths that result from epidemics are attributed to the actions of revenants (Barber 1988). Written sources contemporaneous to Winnall II and later documents evidence fear of revenants and reveal practices that aimed to protect against these walking dead (Barber 1988; Blair 2009; Geiger 1938–41; Lecouteaux 1987, 19–26). At Winnall II, post-burial practices may well have influenced funerary practices and led to depositions of large or small flints and amulets and to special efforts to ‘seal’ the graves.

Folkloristic sources report many different ways to prevent the appearance of, or to get rid of, revenants. It had to be made impossible for them to leave the grave and measures include anything believed to hinder the body from doing that. This includes decapitation, burning the corpse, constraining the corpse by tying or otherwise blocking it from moving, or burying it under a pile of rocks (examples in: Geiger 1938–41, 572–574; Lecouteaux 1987, 23, 30, 31–35, 66–80). Many post-burial practices identified at Winnall II could be understood in such a way: bending or twisting the legs (graves 11, 23); placing flints to weigh down the body (grave 24, 25; 18?); decapitation to properly kill the dead (graves 23, maybe 10); or disorient them by placing the arms in front of the head (graves 11, 25). Post-burial practices were partly following norms: the deposition of large and small flints was applied to the burials of women and immature individuals; only adults had their legs bent or twisted and were decapitated.

Body manipulations, depositions of flints and the provision of amulets cluster together (Figure 5.5). Central to the cluster is grave 10, which contained the skeletal remains of an individual aged over 50 years (Table 5.1) buried with the typical attributes of a ‘cunning woman’, a woman who may have performed healing and magical practices (Dickinson 1993; Meaney 1981). The finds include a silver pin, silver wire rings and a bronze tag found at various depths in the grave fill (Figure 5.4). A fragmentary iron key and a piece of seashell were found at the bottom of the grave. The organization of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries is often assumed to be according to family groups (*e.g.* Sayer 2007). In our case this could indicate

that post-burial body manipulations and amulet depositions concerned the graves of one family or kin group. The amulets deposited in the graves may well have been provided by the cunning woman (or after her death by her successor). It could indicate that it was this particular family which performed post-depositional body manipulations or that the bodies of the clan of the cunning woman were particularly suspicious and were therefore manipulated by the burying community.

The pace and advance of decay of a body is hard to predict (*e.g.* Mant 1987). In fact, reopening a grave is the only way to assess the stage of decay of a body. The identification of someone as a revenant is in folklore often connected to decomposition of the corpse – revenants are believed not to decompose (Barber 1988; Klaniczay 1991; Lecouteaux 1987). At Winnall II, the majority of graves were reopened very soon after burial when decay of the bodies was not advanced. As Zoë Devlin (this volume) highlights, there is documentary and archaeological evidence for very polarised meanings of human corpses in the middle and later Anglo-Saxon period. A connection between the appearance of the body and the nature of the deceased was made: un-decayed saints' bodies were seen as evidence for holy lives and the display of corpses at execution sites showed the maltreated corpses of sinners. The case study of Winnall II draws attention to the ambivalence of the not-decaying body, a characteristic of saints and revenants alike. What they also share is their continuing power after death and the ability to intervene in the affairs of the living – in a good or evil way.

In the Anglo-Saxon period, interventions with body manipulations are rare, while other reasons for grave reopening in Anglo-Saxon England are more frequent. Occasionally graves in field cemeteries in Wessex were reopened for the reuse of the grave pits (Cherryson 2005, 76–79). The insertion of further burials has been seen as burial activity in family plots (Stoodley 2002, 114). Many graves in contemporary Kent were reopened too, but mainly to remove grave goods – 'grave robbery' (Klevnäs 2010). However, also in Kent there were cases where the primary aim was to manipulate the human remains, the final burial evidence resembling 'deviant burials' as a consequence. But, unlike at Winnall II, in most cases re-opening took place after the complete decomposition of the corpse (*ibid.*, 168–174), again highlighting that interventions with body manipulations such as in Winnall II are certainly exceptional.

Finally, some concluding remarks on the discussion of the concept of deviant burial introduced at the beginning of this chapter. The analysis of Winnall II nicely illustrates some of the problems outlined earlier (Aspöck 2008; 2009). At Winnall II, we can see ample evidence that could be categorised as types of deviant burial. In fact, given the low number of disturbed graves, we may even see more deviance than norm.

Looking more closely, however, for example at the undisturbed graves too small for adults – potentially a burial rule for adults with a child-like status – it becomes difficult to judge. Is this normal or a variation of the normal or already deviant? What defines the boundary? The discussion is obsolete I believe. I think it is time to move away from a dichotomous concept of mortuary behaviour. Winnall II has revealed a series of mortuary practices which should not be thrown into one category as each needs to be studied on its own. I think that generally, through new methodological possibilities and the current increasing

awareness of taphonomic factors for analysis of mortuary evidence, we are ready to move on and to develop approaches that embrace the full complexity of past mortuary behaviour.

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THE BURNT, THE WHOLE AND THE BROKEN: FUNERARY VARIABILITY IN THE LINEARBANDKERAMIK¹

Daniela Hofmann

Funerary variability and deviance in early Neolithic central Europe

‘Deviant’ burials – *i.e.* those not following a recognised cultural norm – are a recurring factor in interpretations of central European prehistory. However, the idea of deviance has often been used in a restrictive way, especially in the context of the early Neolithic with which this chapter is concerned. So far, the main research approach has been to define a funerary ‘norm’, quite close to modern ideas of a pious burial, and to treat any diverging behaviour explicitly as ‘deviance’ in the sense of an abnormality denoting inferior status. This chapter sets out to challenge these assumptions. Focusing on the details of the funerary rites themselves, it is possible to reveal parallel strands between so-called ‘normative’ and ‘deviant’ burials. Practices more explicitly focused on the presentation of the body in the grave and those stressing dissolution have enough common ground to suggest that they are part of a shared funerary logic, albeit one with a certain amount of creativity. The idea of ‘deviants’ should be confined to the few examples in which neither presentation nor dissolution formed the focus of care by the survivors, rather than being employed every time a new variation on common themes is identified.

The central European early Neolithic is defined by the Linearbandkeramik (LBK, *c.* 5500–4900 cal BC), which eventually stretched from the Ukraine to the Paris Basin and from western Hungary into northern Germany and Poland (*e.g.* Whittle 1996; Figure 6.1). Traditionally dominated by settlement research, the discovery and publication of several large burial grounds from the 1980s onwards (*e.g.* Dohrn-Ihmig 1983; Modderman 1985; Nieszery 1995) has reinvigorated funerary archaeology. Roughly 3000 LBK burials are now published, while unpublished cemeteries and secondary burial sites can be estimated to contain over 1500 more – a figure unimaginable only twenty years ago. Most are burials of

¹ This article was first submitted in 2011. New research published since could unfortunately not be incorporated. While the interpretations of individual sites have sometimes changed, the general argument remains unaffected.

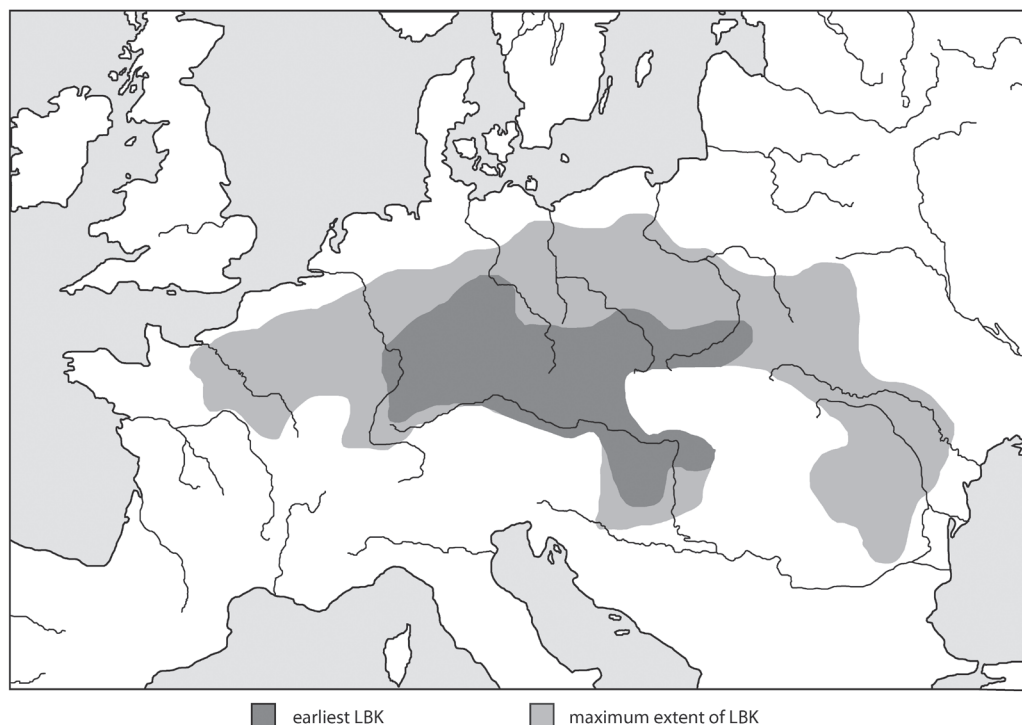


Figure 6.1. Map of maximum extent of LBK distribution (after Midgley 2005, 14).

complete bodies in cemeteries, generally crouched on their left and with the head facing east or south-east (e.g. Jeunesse 1997, 62–66). Individuals can be provisioned with grave goods, although the likelihood of receiving these varies regionally, between sites, and according to demographic factors (Hofmann forthcoming). Typical grave goods include polished stone axes and adzes, flint tools, pottery, *Spondylus* shells imported from the Mediterranean, and a variety of ornaments from local materials (such as river shells, animal bone or limestone), amongst others (e.g. Jeunesse 1997). Cremations also occasionally occur.

In addition, there are burials on settlement sites, either in grave pits or in settlement features, such as rubbish pits or ditches (e.g. Orschiedt 1998; Veit 1996). These burials, although still often crouched, do not conform to a majority orientation and are less likely to receive grave goods. For example, in Lower Bavaria almost three quarters of the 88 known settlement burials are unfurnished, compared with less than 40% of the 387 cemetery burials. Finally, there are now an increasing number of sites with evidence for defleshing of corpses, perhaps even cannibalism, the subsequent fragmentation of skeletal remains and their deposition in caves or ditches (e.g. Boulestin *et al.* 2009; Orschiedt 1999).

Both settlement burials and fragmented remains are sometimes referred to as ‘*Sonderbestattungen*’ in the German literature. This term has been translated as ‘special

burials' by Veit (1993, 107) and in the first instance simply refers to a minority burial rite, whether this be defined spatially, through body treatment or by any other variable. Theoretically, it could include both people buried differently because of their high status and those buried in negatively valued ways (Orschiedt 1998, 35f; Veit 1996, 27–35). However, as Orschiedt (1998, 35) has criticised, '*Sonderbestattung*' in practice tends to be used with very negative connotations, making it much closer to what is generally termed 'deviant' burial in English.²

For instance, Veit (1996, 205) interprets settlement burials as containing people 'at the margins of society', associated with refuse and excluded from receiving grave goods, which 'is most probably related to [their] generally lower social status' (Veit 1996, 185; my translations). This conclusion sits uneasily with other strands in Veit's argument, since he elsewhere describes burial customs as informed by a flexible logic of practice adapted to each particular circumstance, and therefore not reducible to a single variable such as status (Veit 1996, 210–212).

In contrast, Wahl (1994, 85–88) criticises the term *Sonderbestattung* for its too positive connotations. For him, a '*Bestattung*', i.e. a burial, still implies that rites were carried out for the deceased and some thought was given to location, body position and other factors. This should not be assumed for the dead on settlements, whether complete or fragmented. Their deposition in pits with other primary functions and an association with 'rubbish' lead him to suggest that the word *Verlochung* – the dumping of a body seen as refuse – should be used unless the ritual nature of the burial can be proven (Wahl 1994, 88–90). Here, the issue is how to characterise non-correspondence to a norm, and attributes such as 'carelessness' or 'lack of piety' are applied, often without any in-depth justification.

Interpretations of fragmentary remains have been in the same vein. While settlement burials at least correspond to some of the 'norms' of cemetery burial – for instance a preference for the crouched position – defleshed and fragmented remains are seen as so alien and uncommon that no effort is made to integrate them into wider burial customs. They are described as the remains of human sacrifices (e.g. Höckmann 1985), cannibalism (e.g. Kunkel 1955) or disturbed settlement burials (Pariat 2007; Petrasch 2000). Where the context of their deposition has been more spectacular, as at Herxheim in the Palatinate (see below), some have suggested that social outcasts, witches or slaves were slaughtered en masse as a response to social stresses brought on by climatic deterioration (Gronenborn 2006).

Veit's (1996) contradictory statements, Wahl's (1994) search for an 'objective' vocabulary and Gronenborn's (2006) bloodthirsty scenarios stem from the same desire for categorisation. All attempt to set up general rules and explain deviations from them. Yet this leads to an ambiguous position for settlement and fragmentary burials. On the one hand, their location and rarity make them 'special' – whether in the sense of a *Sonderbestattung* or of discarded and impure dead. Yet on the other hand, it is assumed that the same categories of evaluation used for cemeteries remain applicable: provision

2 The term has also been used for some cemetery burials that stand out through their position and/or grave goods, most notably by Peschel (1992). Although she does not see *Sonderbestattungen* as necessarily low status, her study often remains limited to anecdotal explanations for isolated phenomena and has hence had little impact on how norm and deviance are discussed in an LBK context.

with grave goods and regular position and orientation. This means that in spite of a mass of new material, consensus on LBK burial practices has been slow to shift. Cemeteries still dominate most accounts, with other practices regarded as atypical, deviant, low status and of little import in the reconstruction of LBK society. As pointed out amongst others by Frirdich (2003, 546), this position is theoretically flawed and largely down to what we today see as the natural and pious way of burying our dead. Cemetery burials, especially those with grave goods, have been set up as a yardstick against which all other forms of burial can be compared – largely unfavourably.

To get beyond funerary variability as simply an indication of norm and deviance, the present article outlines possible connections between the different rites. If parallel practices can be identified, then the different rites do to an extent share the same vocabulary. This would make it unnecessary to decide *a priori* which practice is ‘normal’ and which is ‘deviant’. Instead, all can be used to investigate early Neolithic ideas of the human body and what happened to it after death. These ideas formed a background from which a range of practices foregrounding different aspects could develop, all of which are concerned with managing the irreversible transformations of the cadaver (Nilsson Stutz 2008). It is only in a second stage that we should ask whether the relative status of these rites is a fruitful line of inquiry.

Cemetery burial

Whole bodies in cemeteries (Figure 6.2) have been seen as the default burial rite. In fact, most of the LBK bodies we do know of have been recovered from cemetery excavations, so this group is numerically dominant. However, this is not equally the case for all time periods or regions. Cemeteries are absent from the first 250 years or so of LBK development, with the oldest examples (*e.g.* Vedrovice in Moravia – Pettitt and Hedges 2008) dating to after 5300 cal BC. Similarly, there are no known cemeteries from areas such as the Paris Basin, or indeed most of Hesse (but see Jorns 1962). Cemetery burial was not the only possible option for disposal of the dead at any given place and time, and judging from the discrepancy between known settlements and burial sites many or even most individuals were probably treated in archaeologically invisible ways, making cemetery burial itself a ‘special’ rite. While cemeteries dominate our sample, therefore, looking for connections with other kinds of mortuary practice could help to explain why the importance of cemetery burial was not constant throughout the LBK.

The way cemeteries have been interpreted has not been conducive to drawing comparisons with other kinds of rite. In general, the burial rite itself is seen as uniform and predictable (for a notable exception, see Jeunesse 2002), and attention therefore focuses on grave goods, most particularly on their relative value (*e.g.* Jeunesse 1997, 119; Modderman 1985, 105–111; Nieszery 1995, 204–209). The guiding premise is that grave goods reflect the status and role of the deceased in life. By ranking graves according to the value of their goods, we can define whether society was hierarchical or egalitarian – and this in many cases

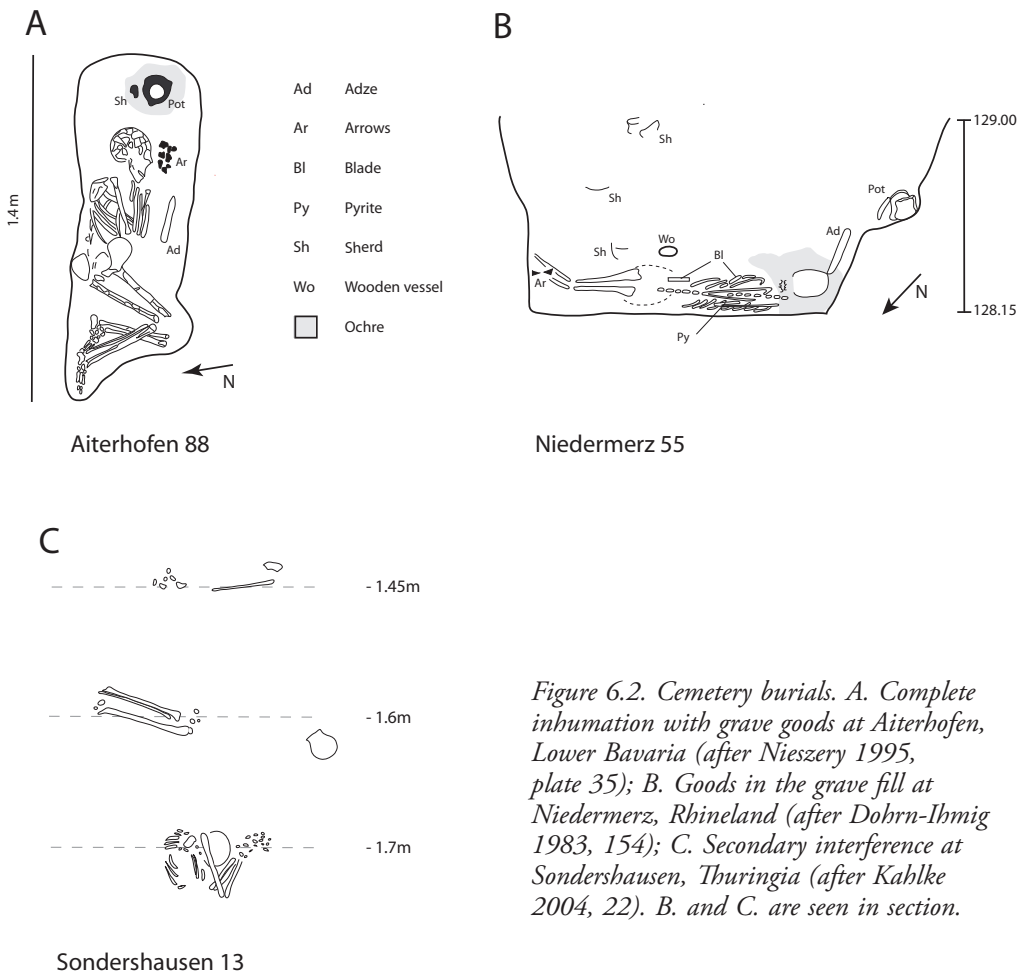


Figure 6.2. Cemetery burials. A. Complete inhumation with grave goods at Aiterhofen, Lower Bavaria (after Nieszery 1995, plate 35); B. Goods in the grave fill at Niedermerz, Rhineland (after Dohrn-Ihmig 1983, 154); C. Secondary interference at Sondershausen, Thuringia (after Kablke 2004, 22). B. and C. are seen in section.

remains the only question asked. In the currently accepted position, men, especially older men, are seen as higher status than women and children. In addition, there is an 'upper stratum' of extremely rich male, female and child graves on some sites, perhaps high-status families with hereditary privileges (Jeunesse 1997, 111–127).

Differences in status were important in the LBK, but it is extremely limiting to focus on them to the exclusion of all other aspects. In the context of the argument made here, seeing grave goods as the main factor draws attention to what divides cemetery burial from other kinds of rite, rather than identifying potential avenues for comparison. In many cases, these analyses also neglect important aspects such as possible chronological change in funerary customs³ or the existence of local or regional traditions (but see *e.g.* Hofmann forthcoming;

3 Constructing a chronological picture is often difficult, as dating relies on the typological classification of pottery. Depending on the site in question, few graves contain enough distinctive vessels to be able to fit them confidently into a specific stylistic phase, rather than broadly into the 'early' or 'mid/late' LBK.

Müller *et al.* 1996). Perhaps the most important criticism is that funerary practices are seen as static. They merely reflect social order, rather than contributing to its perpetuation (or change), and they are certainly not investigated in their own right as an arena of potentially creative social practice that can tell us about attitudes to bodies or beliefs.

It is not possible to discuss all these issues in this short contribution. Instead, I take as my starting point the inherent contradiction of the body in the grave. On the one hand, it provides an idealised picture of the deceased with objects combined in recurrent and accepted ways to create a recognisable and valued identity, and this is the analytical focus in most studies. Yet on the other hand, this picture is the culmination of a set of flexible performances and relationships: obtaining these goods, assembling them in the grave, and making them work in the context of the rite itself. The 'fixed' picture displayed in the grave is only one possible, negotiated outcome. In fact, there are indications that even for cemetery burials there were alternative performances, although these are rarely discussed. These involve the giving away or destroying of goods, but also of the body itself.

Let me illustrate this with the example of *Spondylus* objects. As imports from the Mediterranean, these had to be obtained through extensive contacts, probably involving many people both as trading partners and in order to produce goods to exchange for the shells (*e.g.* Sfériadès 1996). Some of these items were probably relatively 'fixed' parts of people's identities. Arm rings, for example, have relatively small diameters and it is suggested that these were bestowed as gifts in later childhood and could then no longer be removed without breaking them (Nieszery 1995, 185f). However, other *Spondylus* items were used more flexibly and accumulated biographies linking many owners. Thus, some belt buckles were altered by blocking off old suspension holes and drilling new ones, indicating a change in wearer (*e.g.* Müller 2002, 85–87). Similarly, necklaces were often composed of beads with very different wear patterns. Some of these objects apparently circulated over several generations and were repeatedly recombined into new ornaments – up to a third of beads on a necklace were clearly older than the rest. Even broken or very worn items were kept in circulation, with armring fragments for example recycled into pendants (Bonnardin 2009, 283–286, 298).

Spondylus items thus do not reflect identity in a straightforward way. An ornament assemblage took effort and time to build up and involved negotiation with many people. Yet any assemblage built up in this way was probably difficult to maintain, as these very connections with others put conflicting demands on the objects (for an anthropological discussion, see *e.g.* Thomas 1991; Weiner 1992). If items such as beads circulated regularly, there were likely pressures to pass them on to relatives, affines or trading partners at various occasions. The display in the grave thus presents as 'finished' an assemblage which was constantly in a state of flux, and it is impossible to know how many additional items were instead given away to be reworked into someone else's adornments. In this sense, relations with others are integral to building up a person's identity over a lifetime, and to the way it could be displayed in death. The snapshot of the body in the grave is not a straightforward reflection of a static social reality but a site of negotiation at which conflicting claims had to be accommodated. Things could always have gone differently.

This introduces an element of instability: what has been built up can also be dissolved and dispersed; there are alternative trajectories for goods and people which do not involve simple deposition in the grave. This opens up interpretive possibilities for several aspects which link LBK cemetery burial to other kinds of rite, particularly the breaking of goods and the interest shown in the decomposition of the body.

Grave goods themselves could occasionally be deliberately fragmented. Broken objects occur both in the fills of graves and at the level of the skeleton in undisturbed features, and many were seemingly deposited in an incomplete state. For example, in grave 7 at the Niederdorla cemetery in Thuringia all the goods present were incomplete, including vessels with old breaks and missing sherds, an adze, a bone awl, a rubbing stone and a whetstone (Walther and Schwedler 1991, 209). Elsewhere, concentrations of sherds are found at various levels in the grave fill (see *e.g.* Dohrn-Ihmig 1983; Figure 6.2). Over 20% of LBK cemetery inhumations contain incomplete goods at the level of the skeleton.⁴ It is tempting to see the fragmentation of goods as a metaphor for the breaking of social ties by death and their renegotiation among the survivors (as *e.g.* in Barraud *et al.* 1994; Battaglia 1990; Maschio 1998). As parts of these renegotiations, objects linked to the deceased, or linking them to the living, could be smashed or given away, creating both a memorable occasion and a way of realigning relationships.

The body itself could undergo similar processes of fragmentation. Indeed, the physical decay of bodies appears to have been increasingly managed throughout the LBK. For cemeteries, one could quote the example of grave 13 at Sondershausen (Kahlke 2004, 55). The remains of the adult female had been manipulated at a time when they were still at least partly in anatomical connection. The head was displaced, and parts of her legs were reburied up to 40 cm higher in the grave fill (Figure 6.2). Similarly, Gerling (2009, 105) has argued that at the site of Schwetzingen, bodies were deliberately removed from some of the grave pits after initial decay, and examples may exist on other sites where isolated human bones are occasionally found in the fills of other graves and where some grave pits may even have been emptied out (*e.g.* Lenneis 2010; Nieszery 1995, 23–25). The timescales involved here are not clear; while anatomical connections were preserved in some cases, other bodies had perhaps completely skeletonised. Yet evidently, the idealised picture of the body in the grave was not always the final episode of engagement with the deceased.

This is even clearer in the case of cremations, which are also encountered on several cemeteries and can sometimes form the majority rite (*e.g.* Czekaj-Zastawny 2009, 43).⁵ Cremation is a sensually dramatic transformation of the human body which results in its complete fragmentation in a matter of hours (*e.g.* McKinley 1997; Oestigaard 1999; Williams 2004). Although they result in fragmentation, LBK cremations are rarely characterised as ‘deviant’, perhaps because this rite is familiar to us today. However, they

4 The proportion of graves with goods deliberately included in the fill is more difficult to estimate, as many cemeteries were close to contemporary or earlier sites and material could have been accidentally incorporated into grave fills. Nevertheless, distinct concentrations and occasional whole objects show that in some cases at least these inclusions were deliberate (for further discussion and references, see Hofmann forthcoming).

5 Overall, cremations are likely to remain under-represented, as they are often buried at a shallower depth and more likely to fall victim to erosion (*e.g.* Modderman 1970, 70).

are sometimes interpreted as lower status, largely because few goods are found with them (Lüning 1997, 48; Peschel 1992, 197–199; for a critique see *e.g.* Modderman 1985, 102; Trautmann 2007; Trautmann and Wahl 2005, 18). This is most likely because most goods were placed on the pyre, as shown by traces of burning on flint and stone items (*e.g.* Nieszery 1995, catalogue). Cremated remains in the LBK are rarely deposited within or under containers, but are often mixed with the burnt pyre goods, sometimes including animal bone (*e.g.* Schmotz 1992). The point to stress here is that cremation speeds up and emphasises some of the trends discussed for inhumations. Goods are destroyed and the deceased's body is broken down rapidly, only to become mingled with other bodies, pyre debris and fragments of artefacts.

Looking at cemetery burial in more detail has provided a set of themes and practices which go beyond the simple reflection of the deceased's (implicitly fixed) identity through the provision of grave goods. There are strong indications that some goods could have been given away, foregrounding relations with other people, and that other items were destroyed or fragmented. This kind of dissolution and dispersal also applied to some of the human bodies. The 'ideal images' created in the grave were not necessarily fixed, and in the case of cremation the focus of the rite was on the body's transformation and dissolution. It is these aspects of cemetery burial which resonate with the practices often labelled as deviant in the literature.

Settlement burial and fragmentary remains

Settlement burials also often stress relations with others, albeit by means other than grave goods. In the Paris Basin, for instance, the location of the deceased in relation to houses depended on age, with the youngest children tending to be closest to the walls of a building (Thévenet 2009, 120f). Although it is hard to prove that house and burial were contemporary, this could reflect young children's close ties with the household of their birth. At the Bavarian settlement of Otzing, double burials were exceptionally frequent and details of the rite suggest that these interments referenced each other in terms of body position, orientation and the physical closeness of the two occupants (Figure 6.3). This created a subtle vocabulary with which to express social relationships (Hofmann 2009). In the settlement context, ideal pictures were still being created. Far from isolating these dead as 'special', their ties to others remained central to the funerary process.

Similarly, the dead buried on settlements could become the focus of further manipulation. In Alsace and the Paris Basin in particular, a hollow space was occasionally intentionally retained around the buried body (*e.g.* Boës 2000; 2006; Thévenet 2004). One possibility was to excavate a niche in the side of the grave pit in which the body was placed, most probably protected by an organic covering, such as planks or a leather cover, and allowing continued access. Sometimes this is paired with a ledge at the opposite end of the grave, on which goods can be placed (Figure 6.3). This kind of burial is known as a *niche-et-banquette* grave and may well be under-represented, as it is hard to recognise in loess

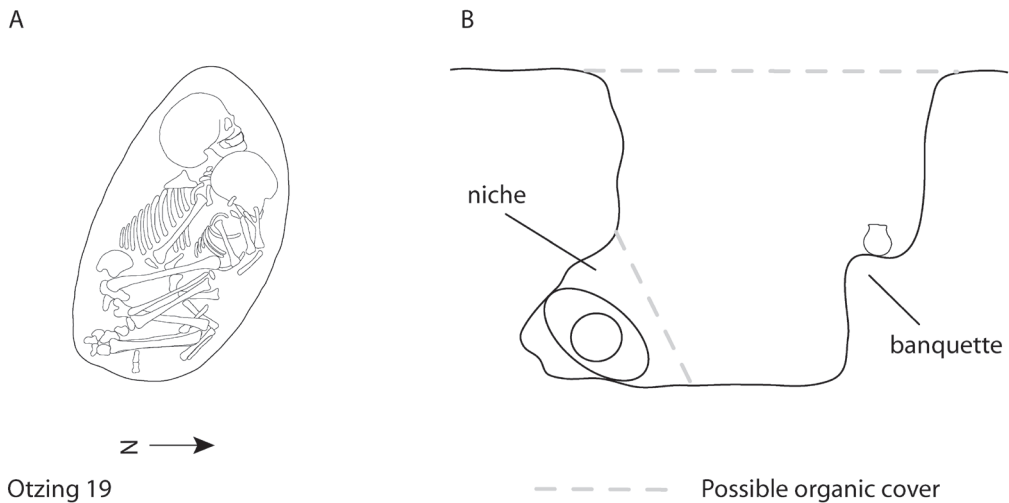


Figure 6.3. Settlement burials. A. Double burial at Otzing, Lower Bavaria (after Schmotz and Weber 2000, 29); B. Schematic representation of a Paris Basin 'niche et banquette' construction (after Thévenet 2004, fig. 8).

(Thévenet 2004). Certainly, engagement with the deceased need not end after initial burial (see also Whittle 1988, 153).

Perhaps the partial burials and isolated human bones occasionally recovered on settlement sites are the outcome of such practices, and not always entirely accidental (as *e.g.* argued by Petrasch 2000). Partial burials have been known for some time and most frequently concern heads (see *e.g.* Hoffmann 1971). Perhaps the most iconic is the skull of a five- to six-year-old child from Quedlinburg, Saxony-Anhalt, which was placed inside a bowl, covered by a storage vessel, and then buried in a settlement pit close to a hearth (Rienäcker 1978, 122). At Königschaffhausen in Baden-Württemberg, two child skulls without their mandibles were placed beside each other, facing in the same direction (Orschiedt 1998, 17). Many more examples could be cited, but it seems clear that continued engagement with the deceased is a feature uniting settlement and cemetery burials. While the audience may have differed, the general vocabulary of treatments was comparable.

This can also be extended to the fragmented remains recovered from caves and enclosures. Such instances were long known. For example, the 41 people, mostly women and children, thrown into the shaft of the Jungfernhöhle cave, northern Bavaria, were reported on in the 1950s and originally interpreted as victims of cannibalism (Kunkel 1955). In contrast, a re-examination of the remains (Orschiedt 1999) suggested that initial decay may have taken place elsewhere, with selected body parts then further fragmented and 'reburied'. The remains were mixed with burnt animal bone, sherds and flint tools.

Yet the most spectacular examples of this practice come from enclosure ditches



Figure 6.4. One of the calottes from Herxheim, showing intentional smashing and cut marks. Reproduced with kind permission of Jörg Orschiedt.

surrounding contemporary settlements, most notably Herxheim in the Rhineland Palatinate (e.g. Zeeb-Lanz *et al.* 2007; 2009). The remains here belong to *c.* 450 people, after the excavation of only roughly half the segmented pit enclosure. While occasional bigger units, such as pelvic girdles, have come to light, most remains have been intentionally fragmented into tiny splinters of bone (e.g. Zeeb-Lanz *et al.* 2007). Traces on skulls show that defleshing had sometimes taken place prior to fragmentation (Orschiedt and Haidle 2009; Figure 6.4), while recent work by Boulestin *et al.* (2009) suggests cannibalism and marrow extraction. The interpretation of this evidence is controversial, with some arguing that humans were eaten as part of a late LBK violent crisis in the course of which outsiders, such as enemies, slaves or witches, were executed (Gronenborn 2006). This, then, would be a prime example of deviant and abnormal burial. However, these arguments are ultimately unconvincing. The Herxheim individuals show no sign of nutritional stress, while traces of lethal violence are absent even from better preserved remains (Orschiedt and Haidle 2009). Regionally, there is no evidence for overpopulation or similar stress factors (Zeeb-Lanz 2009, 95). Furthermore, the sheer number of remains, which were probably deposited over less than fifty years (Boulestin *et al.* 2009), is inconsistent with ethnographic accounts of witch hunts in pre-state societies (e.g. Stewart and Strathern 2004, 186–193).

Rather than marginalising Herxheim, it is worth pointing out some of the evident links with other practices. As elsewhere, the human remains have been mixed with animal

bone, flint and bone tools and sherds (*e.g.* Zeeb-Lanz *et al.* 2007), and this material seems carefully selected. Compared to the adjacent settlement, the animal bone assemblage is skewed towards dogs, small fur-bearing mammals, bird wings and cattle (Arbogast 2009). Pottery decoration reveals the potential import or imitation of wares from several hundred kilometres away (Zeeb-Lanz *et al.* 2009). These objects were not arranged around the human remains in structured deposits. Instead, a thorough admixture took place before the resulting mass was tipped into the open pits (Haack 2009). In addition, paralleling finds elsewhere, the head was singled out for special treatment. Large numbers of heads were transformed into skull calottes through the careful removal of the scalp, flesh and facial skeleton. The repetitiveness of the technique, down to how and where the blows were administered, indicates a routine process (Orschiedt and Haidle 2009, 47). Some calottes were then deposited in little clusters, akin to finds from other sites such as the 18 calottes from the Taborac in Lower Austria (Mossler 1949).

Although Herxheim is unique in terms of the number of individuals involved and in the care taken in excavation and post-excavation analysis, it is not perhaps unique in terms of practice. Themes of fragmentation and admixture are encountered at other sites, and smaller-scale examples are known from other enclosures. At Eilsleben in Saxony-Anhalt, fragments of calottes, a child skull and the bones of several hands and feet have been recovered both from a later LBK enclosure and from pits in its interior (*e.g.* Kaufmann 1989). At Menneville in the Paris Basin, the complete or partial skeletons of 11 children in irregular positions were recovered in groups of two or three at the base of several ditch segments. They were associated with sherds and animal bone, mostly sheep/goats and cattle (Farruggia *et al.* 1996). Some of these deposits were later commemorated by the placement of cattle bucrania at higher levels in the fill (Farruggia *et al.* 1996; Kirk 1998).

The burial of partial or fragmented human bodies in connection with other material is hence increasingly recognisable as a recurrent theme. What varies is the amount of control exercised over this process and the rapidity with which it was accomplished. Secondary burial encompasses a potentially lengthy period of decay, and it is not clear whether this was managed. At Herxheim, defleshing, the suggested consumption of at least some of the deceased and the extreme fragmentation of most of the others attest to a process at once more controlled and more rapid, although perhaps slower than cremation. In addition, all these contexts are linked by the way in which other items of material culture are mixed with the human remains.

Re-thinking ‘deviance’ for LBK funerary practices

Although for some of the dead, one possible ideal image was fixed at burial and remained largely unchanged, substantial numbers of LBK people were not simply buried. Instead, their bodies were disassembled and mixed with other materials in a managed process.⁶ Far

⁶ Similar concerns are also evident in the treatment of anthropomorphic figurines, a topic discussed at length elsewhere (see *e.g.* Hofmann 2005; 2012).

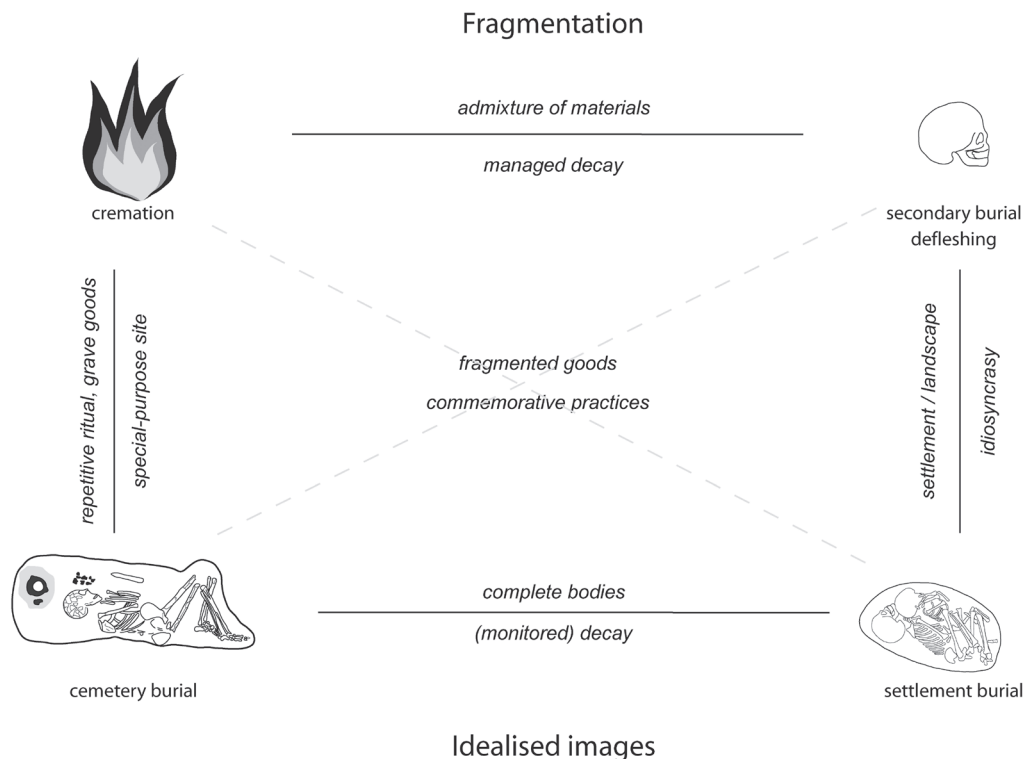


Figure 6.5. Diagram of connections between different LBK burial practices (for image sources, see previous figures).

from anecdotal, these concerns are visible in a range of practices and contexts, including in cemeteries. Rather than declaring some practices the ‘norm’ and marginalising others, they can be combined into a field of various concerns and strategies in dealing with the human body after death (Figure 6.5). There are differences in which of the multiple concerns a given practice particularly stresses, yet there are enough linkages between all treatments to make none of them stand out as straightforwardly ‘deviant’.

For instance, settlement and cemetery burial centre on the creation of an idealised picture of the deceased, constituted according to general preferences in position and, secondarily, orientation. Grave goods play a greater role in cemeteries, but the establishment of micro-traditions and the referencing of other graves unite both contexts (Hofmann 2009). The decay of the body can be interfered with and exhumations occur, but in only some cases. On the other hand, cremation, defleshing or secondary burial are focused on fragmenting the human body, albeit at varying speeds and with greater or lesser control over the process. The admixture of people with animals and things is frequent, but cremations are largely limited to a cemetery setting, while fragmented remains can come from enclosures, settlement sites

or caves. There is also variation in the degree of fragmentation, ranging from the removal of isolated limbs to reducing a body into tiny bone splinters.

Although two poles – presentation and fragmentation – can hence be identified, both sets of practices are linked to each other. As far as can be shown, cremation and cemetery burial tend to place greater stress on the repetition of ritual sequences and grave good associations. In contrast, settlement burials and fragmented remains share a greater idiosyncrasy of practice. All contexts are characterised by the presence of fragmented objects in association with the deceased, whether immediately with the human remains or at higher levels in the fill. Commemorative practices in the form of exhumation or the later marking of the burial by objects, animal bones or further interments are another unifying factor. Finally, special attention to the head also applies throughout. In cemeteries, the head and upper body are most often singled out for colouring with red ochre (*e.g.* Bonnardin 2009, 273; Nieszery 1995, 106–110), and as we have seen on settlement sites and among fragmented remains the head is often specially treated. Trepanations were also practiced and survived in the LBK, showing a preoccupation for and accumulated experience in treating the head (*e.g.* Alt and Jeunesse 2006). The head was hence perhaps seen as a container of vital substance, singled out for curation, special attention and violence (see below; also Hofmann 2012).

If we were to identify ‘deviant’ burials in the Bandkeramik, they would have to find themselves completely outside this field of relations. This is indeed the case for the several instances of mass burials, which are characterised by the absence of both an ideal image of the deceased and a prolonged interaction with their remains. For instance, the 34 individuals from a late LBK mass grave at Talheim, south-west Germany, were violently killed by adze-blows to the head and then dumped haphazardly into a large pit (Wahl and König 1987). At Asparn in Lower Austria, more than 100 people, again often showing head injuries, were scattered in a ditch surrounding the settlement, most likely after an attack. Gnaw marks on many bones show that the deceased lay unburied for some time (Teschler-Nicola *et al.* 1996). No attempt was made to retrieve or further treat the remains. As a last example, ten mostly seven- to fifteen-year-old individuals were tightly squeezed into a pit at Wiederstedt, Saxony-Anhalt. This time, there are no visible traumatic injuries, and it is suggested that these are the victims of a contagious childhood disease (Meyer *et al.* 2004). At neither of these sites could possible grave goods be identified.

What unites all these examples is the way in which the deceased have at most been hastily buried, but without corresponding either to the norms of display stressed in cemetery or settlement burial, nor being accorded the lengthy and/or intensive treatments that could transform the body through cremation, secondary burial or defleshing. At Wiederstedt, the individual interred first may have been placed slightly flexed on their left side (Meyer *et al.* 2004) – a vague echo of the ideal images presented in other contexts. However, this is not very clear and was definitely abandoned for all the others. The feature uniting all these examples is the almost total lack of engagement of any form. Most likely this took place as a response to a ‘bad death’, with deviation from established funerary rites due to the manner of people’s demise. All other identities the deceased held were suppressed; there was no incentive to wind up their ties and obligations to others. Irregular body positions

and lack of engagement could express horror in the face of catastrophic circumstances, or disregard by the perpetrators of violence. Here, the conventional strategies of burial were insufficient or not applicable; these bodies had been torn from the flow of social life and were simply left.

Conclusions and outlook

In the LBK, burial rites primarily stressing the dissolution of the human body existed alongside the inhumation of complete, single human bodies in cemeteries, although the latter themselves were the products of multiple relations. A rigid separation and strict evaluation of different kinds of burial, which stigmatises as 'deviant' those not conforming to a rite we recognise today, is unhelpful. Instead we can suggest a continuum of practices positioned between, on the one hand, creating idealised images of adorned bodies and, on the other, fragmenting the physical remains of the person. The shared aspects of these rites make them part of a coherent system or funerary logic, although there was a large degree of creativity in the details of rites and practices.

This picture is still rather general, but in spite of continuing problems in dating burials without diagnostic pottery, it may be possible to discern three overlapping phases: in the earliest LBK (c. 5500–5300/5250 cal BC), there are virtually only settlement burials, and even these are rare. Only towards the very end are some burial grounds established, most notably Vedrovice in Moravia (Pettitt and Hedges 2008). However, some earliest LBK settlement burials can receive lavish good assemblages, such as the elderly woman buried with imported shell jewellery at Gerlingen (Orschiedt 1998), or the Schwanfeld 'warrior' with arrowheads and polished stone tools (Gronenborn 2003). There is no indication as to what happened to the majority of bodies, and so it can be suggested that fragmentation of some kind may be a very early and routine component of LBK funerary rites. From the mid LBK, a general diversification is taking place. Settlement burials continue, but cemeteries also appear and some examples for the deliberate manipulation of bodies, such as Sondershausen grave 13 (see above), date to this point. Finally, practices stressing dissolution apparently become more visible over time, as many cremations and the most spectacular instances of fragmentation – the Jungfernhöhle, Menneville or Herxheim – belong to late phases. However, cemetery and settlement burial continue throughout the sequence (Farruggia *et al.* 1996; Kunkel 1955; Nieszery 1995; Zeeb-Lanz *et al.* 2009), so that by the late LBK all these practices were in use concurrently.

These developments coincide with other trends. One is the way in which anthropomorphic figurines become rarer further west and later in the sequence (Hansen 2007, 293–302). It is tempting to see this as a shift in emphasis from one medium of displaying and fragmenting the human body – one focused on clay representations – to another, more directly concerned with the bodies of the deceased. In addition, LBK material culture – most notably houses and pottery – become ever more regionalised over time (*e.g.* Coudart 1998; Pechtl 2015). Apparently, individual bodies were increasingly dissolved in more visible ways at a time in

which the boundaries of local groups and communities were becoming more important. Perhaps their fragmentation, circulation and deposition in selected locales and alongside other substances stood for the subsuming of diverse identities into the wider community and its definition against others, now more explicitly celebrated. At other times, these same treatments could have been used to emphasise differences, perhaps of status or group membership. But this will need to be argued for each context, rather than assumed.

These ideas will need further corroboration, and more must be done to integrate funerary customs into accounts of social change. Yet these reflections could form the beginning of a more fruitful avenue to investigate LBK funerary customs, increasingly revealed as creatively manipulated and varied, while also bound in a coherent logic of body treatment. By artificially defining only one of them as a 'norm' and all others as 'deviant' we neglect the way in which these practices were implicated in wider social changes. With this, we deny ourselves the chance to fully appreciate their interpretive potential in our reconstructions of the past.

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PRACTICES OF RITUAL MARGINALISATION IN LATE PREHISTORIC VENETO: EVIDENCE FROM THE FIELD

Elisa Perego, Massimo Saracino, Lorenzo Zamboni, Vera Zanoni

Introduction

This chapter explores social marginality and practices of ritual marginalisation in late prehistoric and protohistoric Italy, with a focus on funerary data from first-millennium BC Veneto, in north-east Italy. The main goal of this work is to draw attention to a research theme – namely that of past marginality – which remains undervalued in current archaeological debates. In particular, examination of deviant and non-elite burials is an unusual topic for late prehistoric Italian archaeology (although see Bartoloni and Benedettini 2007/2008; Belcastro and Ortalli 2010; on funerary deviancy in European archaeology in general, see Murphy 2008; Reynolds 2009). This chapter therefore aims to prompt new discussions of this theme with a Mediterranean perspective. Furthermore, the specific regional setting of this work is of heightened interest due to the fact that northern Italy remains largely neglected in later prehistoric studies, and its rich archaeological record deserves greater international recognition.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, we propose a theoretical and methodological framework for the identification of social marginality in the funerary record of any given culture. The complex relationship between abnormal mortuary behaviour, funerary ‘deviancy’ and marginality will also be explored. The second section will detail our context of study, dataset, and previous as well as on-going research on the topic, on which the analysis produced in this chapter is based. The final section will return to the theoretical and methodological discussion by analysing the rich archaeological and osteological evidence from Final Bronze Age and Iron Age Veneto (c. 1200/1150–900 BC, and 900–200 BC, respectively and conventionally). In particular, we will underline how some specific features of Venetic burial rituals (*e.g.* the adoption of the inhumation rite, abnormal bodily postures such as the prone position, burial outside formal cemeteries and in marginal cemetery areas, scarcity or lack of grave goods, and evidence of *pre-mortem*, *peri-*

mortem and *post-mortem* violence on skeletal remains) might have been related to practices of socio-political exclusion, reflected in the funerary record. Furthermore, selected burials recently discovered at settlements such as Oppeano (in the province of Verona), Padua, and Villamarzana (in the province of Rovigo), as well as preliminary data from the Narde II cemetery of Frattesina (Rovigo), will be discussed as case studies. Finally, this chapter will introduce the earliest results of our most recent research, which aims to recognise the existence of practices of marginalisation, social exclusion and abnormal mortuary behaviour in Bronze Age northern Italy.

Theory and methodology

The starting point of this contribution is to acknowledge that every human group possesses different socio-political mechanisms to determine the partial or complete exclusion of some of their members from society. On the one hand, these mechanisms may lead to the complete marginalisation of some social categories or single individuals (*e.g.* slaves, outcasts); on the other, they might involve more subtle social practices resulting in forms of exclusion from specific segments or elements of society, such as the ruling or priestly class, a selected gender or age group, or an ethnic majority. In view of this, we use ‘social exclusion’ as a generic catch-all to indicate situations in which – for whatever reasons – one individual became ‘other’ and potentially ‘inferior’ (‘marginal’) in respect to the rest of society, or in respect to selected segments of it. Sometimes, specific conditions of social exclusion can be reflected in the anomalous burial treatment granted to the deceased. Despite on-going research on the topic (*e.g.* Murphy 2008; Reynolds 2009), this is something which remains difficult to determine with certainty. In this section, therefore, we will present a theoretical and methodological framework for the identification of practices of socio-political marginalisation in funerary archaeological contexts; in particular, we will tackle the topic of social marginality from a socio-anthropological, archaeological and bio-archaeological perspective.

Socio-anthropology

Providing a definition of ‘marginality’ from a socio-anthropological point of view is a difficult task, not least because of the richness of the literature available on the subject. Hence, we will limit our review to four different concepts relating to this phenomenon that we believe to be particularly relevant to the issues discussed in this chapter. Our overview will address aspects of the development of the concept of ‘marginality’ in the social sciences during the twentieth century. At the same time, we intend to disclose the complexities and intricacies of socio-political processes of marginalisation, helping to shed light on dynamics that might have been at work also in past societies. The concepts considered are ‘the marginal man’, voluntary marginality, involuntary marginality, and marginalisation.

The first to introduce the concept of ‘marginal man’ was Robert E. Park, one of the most important exponents of the Chicago School of Sociology (Park 1928). In Park’s definition, the ‘marginal man’ is

a cultural hybrid, a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples; never quite willing to break, even if he were permitted to do so, with his past and his traditions, and not quite accepted, because of racial prejudice, in the new society in which he now sought to find a place. He was a man on the margin of two cultures and two societies, which never completely interpenetrated and fused.

(Park 1928, 892)

The concept of ‘marginal man’ was further developed by Park himself and his student Everett V. Stonequist (e.g. Stonequist 1935). In the introduction of Stonequist’s volume *The Marginal Man: A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict*, Park defined the ‘marginal man’ as a socio-psychological category doomed to embody the conflicting dualism between two different cultures and societies (Park 1937). While the ‘marginal man’ was mainly intended as a general social type, Park also associated this category with the Jews of the modern era (Goldberg 2012): “When ... the walls of the medieval ghetto were torn down and the Jew was permitted to participate in the cultural life of the peoples among whom he lived,” Park wrote, the “new type of personality” appeared. “The emancipated Jew was, and is, historically and typically the marginal man, the first cosmopolite and citizen of the world” (Park 1928, 892, cited in Goldberg 2012, 202). Despite subsequent criticism and revision (on this issue see an overview in Goldberg 2012), Park’s mode of thought was extremely influential in the US for the rest of the century, and has been adopted to explore a range of social phenomena wider than race, migration and ethnicity, such as occupation, gender roles, female marginality and scientific innovation (e.g. Goldberg 2012).

The idea of *voluntary marginality*, on the other hand, relates to individuals that reject widely accepted social norms and values and refuse to live according to the rules of their group of belonging. A peculiar form of voluntary marginality may develop in relation to ritual. In the 1960s, British anthropologist Victor Turner (1969) drew on both sociological research by the Chicago School and van Gennep’s analysis of ‘rites of passage’ (van Gennep 1960 [1909]) to develop a distinction between marginality, liminality and inferiority. According to Turner, these conditions would relate to the position of an individual in relation to a *communitas*, namely a group of equals sharing an intense common ritual experience, that develop during a rite of passage (Turner 1969). Hence, Turner detailed the mechanisms through which during rites of passage people reject established social hierarchies, including any pre-existing condition of privilege. In particular, the idea of liminality refers to conditions of ‘in-betweenness’ occurring when individuals have already left behind a previous state of being (such as childhood) but have yet to achieve the status they will hold at the end of a ritual (in this case, adulthood) (Turner 1969). As noted below, the notion of liminality is also relevant to the issue of funerary deviancy: as ethnographic and archaeological studies have shown, death in social conditions of ‘in-betweenness’ might be considered dangerous or polluting by a community, and lead to the adoption of abnormal mortuary practices (e.g. Pauli 1975).

By contrast, *involuntary marginality* applies to individuals or groups who do not choose their condition of social exclusion. Work by Gino Germani (1980) has shed light on a specific aspect of this condition, namely the difference in social norms and values which

may develop between a majority and a minority of individuals or sub-groups. The latter – the minority – would be excluded from holding power in society for a lack of resources (*e.g.* education, employment or financial opportunities) and/or ‘personal skills’, such as attitude, motivation, knowledge and appropriate behavioural models. Paraphrasing Germani (1980):

...individuals and groups who for reasons of race, ethnicity, sex, underdevelopment, and the like are not able to participate in normative social statuses, role, and offices and their obligations and duties. They fail to share in both material and nonmaterial resources available to other members at the centre of society, and thus who experience themselves as personally alienated. (Duling 1995, 648)

Similarly important, and significantly related to the concept of marginality, is the idea of *marginalisation*. Marginalisation represents the mechanism through which inequality emerges, allowing elite social strata to maintain and reinforce their leadership (Arnold 1995; Paynter and McGuire 1991). Processes of segregation may involve, on the one hand, a lack of awareness of their condition by marginalised subjects, on the other, the existence of a marginalising will by dominant groups and individuals. Practices of marginalisation may imply forms of intentional banishment and expulsion, or exclusion from dynamics of power management and redistribution of goods and richness (*i.e.* ‘involuntary marginalisation’); these situations, however, may occasionally be chosen by an individual, who rejects social rules or social values he or she does not share and approve (*i.e.* ‘voluntary marginalisation’) (Dal Ferro 1986). Notably, processes of marginalisation can be applied to the three types of marginality that we listed above.

Archaeology

Particularly challenging is the identification of occurrences of marginality and marginalisation in the funerary record of any given society. Archaeological research has explored the extent to which the adoption of anomalous or rare burial treatments, not conforming to the rite adopted for the majority of a community, might reflect the abnormal social status of the deceased, or their exclusion from society (*e.g.* Murphy 2008; Pauli 1975; Reynolds 2009; Saxe 1970; Shay 1985; Ucko 1969). The adoption of differentiated or deviant burial rites has often been related to the deposition of deviant social personae; these are individuals deemed to be different from the rest of their community for their abnormal way of life (*modus vivendi*) or way of death (*modus moriendi*) (Saracino and Zanoni 2014; Saxe 1970; Shay 1985). While funerary deviancy and the rarity of a burial rite need not to be directly linked to social exclusion, rejection and abuse (Cherryson 2008; Holloway 2008; Perego 2014; Saxe 1970; Shay 1985; Tamorri 2012), the adoption of abnormal mortuary practices might be indeed motivated by social marginality, especially when evidence of violence or forms of maltreatment of the corpse are attested (*e.g.* Reynolds 2009; Tsaliki 2008; below). Written sources may confirm the existence of a relationship between social exclusion and funerary deviancy, or between a *modus moriendi* feared by a community and the adoption of abnormal mortuary treatments. For instance, Graeco-Roman historical sources testify to

widespread beliefs about the existence of dangerous souls and malicious ghosts and describe the methods used to banish the undead (e.g. the Roman *lemures*: Horace, *Epistles* 2.2.209; Ovid, *Fasti* 2.500–539; for a list and discussion of ancient sources: Felton 1999; Johnston 1999; Ogden 2001; Ortalli 2010; Tsaliki 2008, 6). These may include the adoption of deviant funerary rites, the deposition of amulets in a tomb, and ritual mutilation (Chierici 1999; Pauli 1975; Tsaliki 2008; Zanoni 2009/2010). In both ancient and modern societies, folk beliefs about vampirism, the evil eye, magic, witchcraft or – as noted above – the dangers of dying in liminal phases of existence, such as childbirth, or before adulthood, may also lead to social marginalisation, sometimes reflected in the funerary record (Gilchrist 2008; Pauli 1975; Sledzik and Bellantoni 1994; Tsaliki 2001; 2008; below).

As noted below for the Venetic evidence, deviant funerary practices may apply to several aspects of a burial, such the grave assemblage, the body posture, the tomb structure, and the adoption of uncommon burial rites (for example, inhumation where cremation was the norm). While a deviation from the norm for a single parameter may already be significant, combinations with other deviant attributes are particularly relevant to the present study. The latter is a key point because it focuses our attention on the issue of where we draw the line between something that is ‘deviant’ and something that is merely ‘variation’, or a differential expression of a person’s identity, status or the like (see Perego 2014; Tamorri 2012). If several features of a burial differ from the norm – location, grave goods, body posture, tomb structure *etc.* – then the peculiarity of the overall ritual practice might point towards a more extreme level of perceived ‘difference’ than simply a different collection of grave goods, which may have been selected for various reasons not necessarily relating to the (potentially) abnormal status of the dead (Graham pers. comm.).

An issue that is particularly relevant to the Venetic context discussed in this chapter is the place of burial. As ethnographic and archaeological research has shown, the *displacement* of the deceased, and their deposition far from the rest of the community, may be indicative of their segregation in life, or their abnormal *modus moriendi* (for examples relating to suicide, childbirth, disease or violence: Murphy 2008; Pauli 1975; on the concept of displacement: Zanoni 2009/2010; 2011). An anomalous burial location is especially notable when highly formalised burial areas are created and tombs presumably belonging to the elite or to individuals granted normative funerary rites are customarily placed within the funerary space or in prominent areas of a cemetery: this is indeed the case for many Venetic burial contexts (see Perego 2012a; 2014; in press, for a full discussion of this issue). Consequently, special attention should be paid to burials placed outside the formal cemetery (including settlement or domestic burials) or in marginal cemetery areas, especially when these burials are characterised by other deviant attributes, including evidence of physical violence or degradation of the corpse (e.g. d’Agostino 1985; 1990; Reynolds 2009; Saracino 2009; Zanoni 2009/2010; 2011). The placing of dead individuals near frontiers or boundaries is also notable, with burials located near natural or artificial markers defining territorial regions, settlements, ceremonial areas and cemeteries (see for example Saracino and Zanoni 2014). Given their liminal nature, frontiers are often regarded as *loci religiosi* or dangerous places. As such, they are often subjected to strict ritual control, including rites

of purification or foundation rituals (Edlund 1987; Guzzo 1987; Piccaluga 1974; Zifferero 1995). The deposition of human remains in relation to physical or supernatural frontiers may therefore relate to the burial of liminal, dangerous individuals in equally liminal places, or to practices of human sacrifice or exploitation of human remains as ritual offerings to sacralise the boundary (*e.g.* Coles *et al.* 1999; Reynolds 2009; on Veneto and northern Italy: Perego 2012a; 2012b; Zanoni 2011; *in press*).

Bio-archaeology

From a bio-archaeological perspective, an in-depth analysis of skeletal remains and their treatment may offer significant insights into forms of abuse of the corpse and *pre-mortem* and *peri-mortem* trauma and disease, potentially, but not necessarily, indicative of marginality. When associated with abnormal mortuary treatments, evidence of deformity, disease and handicap may suggest that forms of social marginalisation were applied to subjects afflicted by congenital or pathological lesions. As indicated by ethnographic, anthropological, and archaeological research, as well as historical sources, the sick and the mentally ill are often regarded as ‘special people’, either in a positive or in a negative way (people close to a deity vis-à-vis outcasts or unclean and dangerous subjects) (Charlier 2008; Formicola and Buzhilova 2004; Murphy 2008; Reynolds 2009; Sledzik and Bellantoni 1994). Although these conditions on their own do not necessarily imply marginality (Graham 2013; see also Perego 2012a on the Venetic case), the adoption of practices of skeletal manipulation, skeletal selection and mistreatment of the corpse, including mutilation, stoning and binding, might shed light on the attitude of the living towards the dead and their *modus vivendi* or *modus moriendi* (Saponetti *et al.* 2007; Tsaliki 2008; Zanoni 2011). Necrophobic rituals motivated by the fear of the revenant may result in forms of constriction or manipulation of the body (for instance, stoning, binding, exhumation, decapitation, partial cremation and prone burial: Sledzik and Bellantoni 1994; Tsaliki 2001; 2008; Zeiten 1997, 40–41). Evidence of *peri-mortem* and *post-mortem* trauma, abnormal body posture, mutilation, dismemberment and binding may also relate to sacrificial procedures, homicide, execution, massacre, torture and attempts to degrade or humiliate the dead (*e.g.* Osterholtz 2012; Reynolds 2009; Robin Shugh *et al.* 2012). Sometimes, abnormal mortuary treatments and evidence of *peri-mortem* and *post-mortem* violence may only cast light on the anomalous circumstances of death of an individual, and any potential condition of marginality in the last span of his or her life. However, evidence of trauma occurring well before death, and of pathological conditions potentially due to malnutrition, starvation and heavy physical work (*e.g.* metabolic disease, presence of musculoskeletal stressors on the skeleton) might offer important insights into the entire life-history of the deceased, and the potentially harsh life conditions he or she experienced as a marginalised individual who was the victim of abuse and deprivation (Blakey 2001; Danforth 1999; Wilczak *et al.* 2004). These data may be particularly telling when comparable osteological evidence is not recognised on individuals granted normative funerary treatments, or rituals indicative of high rank and prestige, in the context under study (Harrod 2012; Martin *et al.* 2010).

Context: first-millennium BC Veneto, Italy

Having established some of the theoretical and methodological criteria against which burial treatment and marginality might be assessed, we shall now turn our attention to an examination of how these might be used to interpret evidence from a specific socio-cultural context.

The context under examination roughly corresponds to the modern region of Veneto in north-east Italy. During the first millennium BC, this region is believed to have been occupied by the *Veneti*, a population mentioned in Graeco-Roman historical sources (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* XXXVII, 43; Polybius, *Historiae* II, 17, 5; see also Malnati 2003). However, the origins of the people inhabiting ancient Veneto continue to be debated (e.g. Capuis 2009; Gamba *et al.* 2013; Prosdocimi 2002). A progressive increase in social complexity and hierarchy is attested in the region over the first millennium as well as in other parts of Italy (Capuis 2009; De Min *et al.* 2005; Gamba *et al.* 2013; Guidi 2006; 2010; Guidi and Saracino 2008). Crucial developments in the organisation of the main settlements have been widely acknowledged and connected to changes in the region's socio-political setting, which, according to most scholars, appears to have increasingly moved towards urbanisation and forms of statehood (Gamba *et al.* 2013; Guidi 2010; Lomas 2012; Malnati and Gamba 2003). Evidence of proto-urban development seems to date back to the Final Bronze Age, at the end of the second millennium BC (see for example the case of Frattesina: Bietti Sestrieri 2008; De Guio 2009; Leonardi 2009). Evidence of ritual activity in formal sanctuaries is also attested widely across the region (Cresci Marrone and Tirelli 2009; Fogolari and Gambacurta 2001; Gorini and Mastrocinque 2005; Ruta Serafini 2002). Many of the main Venetic sanctuaries began to flourish from the sixth or the fifth centuries BC, although some occurrences of formal cult activity certainly pre-date this phase (Boaro 2001; Ruta Serafini 2003, 60). The Veneto's independence was progressively undermined by Roman expansion in northern Italy from the late third century BC, and the region was annexed to the Roman state in the first century BC (Cuscito 2009; Rigoni 2003).

The pre-Roman funerary rites of Veneto have been the focus of intense study and debate since the earliest discoveries in the second half of the nineteenth century (Bianchin Citton *et al.* 1998; Capuis 2009; Chieco Bianchi and Calzavara Capuis 1985; 2006; Prosdocimi 1882; Soranzo 1885). With rare exceptions discussed below, Venetic burials were always placed in special ritual areas set aside for burying the deceased. Cemeteries were located near a settlement, but strictly outside its border, often beyond a river branch. Cemeteries associated with the main settlements were highly formalised areas, variously characterised by the erection of stone boundaries, internal streets, tombstones, and burial clusters where groups of tombs coalesced in close proximity. Up to c. 450–300 BC, and especially at main centres such as Este and Padua, these clusters were covered by earth mounds where the graves may be grouped in a hierarchical arrangement (Balista and Ruta Serafini 1992; 1998; Gambacurta *et al.* 2005; Leonardi and Cupitò 2004, 2011; Manessi and Nascimbene 2003; Michellini and Ruta Serafini 2005).

Ritual practices relating to death varied across the region, although some common traits

do characterise mortuary rites in the context under study. Cremation was by far the most common visible funerary ritual, although inhumation is also attested (Bianchin Citton *et al.* 1998; Capuis 2009; Chieco Bianchi and Calzavara Capuis 1985; 2006; Gambacurta 1994; 2005; Manessi and Nascimbene 2003; Ruta Serafini 1990; Salzani 2001a; 2005; 2008a). In instances where cremation was adopted, the dead were burned on a funeral pyre, often in association with food remains, animal bones and pottery. Cremated bones were picked out from pyre debris (*ossilegium*) and collected in an urn. The urn was then buried in a tomb container, which could be a rectangular stone box (*cassetta*), a large pot, or a wooden container. Pit graves are also attested. A low earth mound was often raised over the grave, sometimes accompanied by a tombstone. Until the fourth century BC, pyre debris was generally scattered on the tomb. Grave goods and offerings such as ornaments, tools, pottery, food, rare weapons and textile were often placed in the tomb with the dead. The richness and composition of this funerary provision varied according to the age, gender, rank and social affiliation of the deceased. The wealthiest tombs might contain dozens or hundreds of objects (Chieco Bianchi 1987).

Inhumation tombs were usually pits excavated directly into the soil and large enough to accommodate the body of the deceased (Michelini and Ruta Serafini 2005). Sometimes the corpse was wrapped in a cloth, as suggested by the position of the limbs and the presence of pins and brooches near the head and the feet to fasten the shroud (Bondini 2005, 55; Gambacurta 1996, 169). The dead were usually disposed of lying on their back, but individuals in a crouched, flexed and prone position have also been found (Gambacurta 1996, 168–169; Perego 2012a; Saracino 2009; Zamboni and Zanoni 2010; Zanoni 2011). Inhumation tombs containing only one individual were the norm, although double or even multiple inhumation graves are sporadically attested (Gambacurta 1996, 167; Michelini and Ruta Serafini 2005; Ruta Serafini 1990). The ratio of inhumation to cremation tombs varied widely at different sites (Perego 2012a, 214; see Table 7.1). For example, inhumation graves seem to have been more common at Padua (Gamba and Tuzzato 2008, 59; Michelini and Ruta Serafini 2005, 142) but are yet to be identified at other locales such as Montebelluna in the Piave River valley, despite the discovery of more than a hundred cremation graves at this site (Manessi and Nascimbene 2003).

Data and research background

The analysis carried out in this chapter draws on a dataset of over 2,000 cremation and inhumation graves from more than 40 different sites distributed across the whole region, with a focus on main Venetic settlements including Este, Padua, Montebelluna and Oppeano (for the complete database: Perego 2012a, 417–802; for a dataset of burials deposited outside the formal burial ground see also Zanoni 2011; on recently published tombs not covered in Perego 2012a: Gamba *et al.* 2013; Salzani and Colonna 2010). The dataset covers a time span roughly corresponding to the end of the second millennium BC and the early first millennium AD (*c.* 1200 BC–AD 25). As far as the Iron Age is

Site and Cemetery	Chronology	Cremation	Inhumation	Total
Gazzo Veronese – Colombara	10th–6th BC	177	13	190
Gazzo Veronese – Ponte Nuovo	10th–8th BC	77	1	78
Oppeano – Franchine	8th–5th BC	c. 160–170	some	177
Lovara Villa Bortolomea	7th–early 5th BC	52	2	54
Padua – via Umberto I	late 9th–early 1st BC	520	169	689
Padua – via Tiepolo 1988	6th BC	20	8	28
Padua – via Loredan	8th–6th BC	28	1	28
Padua – <i>tumulus</i> via S. Eufemia	6th–5th BC	29	6	35
Padua – ‘ex-Tormene’	late 9th BC–1st/2nd AD	c. 260	c. 40	c. 300
Este – Ricovero	late 9th–1st BC	120?	5?	125?
Este – Benvenuti	8th–1st BC	97	?	100?
Altino – Fornasotti	6th–1st BC	18	9	27
Montebelluna – Posmon 2000–2002	late 7th BC–1st AD	317	–	317

Table 7.1. Number of cremation and inhumation tombs at different Venetic sites (elaboration by Perego after Perego 2012a).

concerned, however, this chapter will focus on evidence dating from the tenth – ninth century to the fifth – fourth century BC: the later evidence is sparser and Rome’s expansion in northern Italy brought about changes in the socio-political and cultural setting of Veneto which cannot be discussed in this contribution. The sampled graves are mainly cremations, as this ritual was largely predominant in Veneto in the time period under consideration. Inhumation graves represent approximately 10–12% of the whole sample (c. 270 graves or anomalous burial pits in settlement areas: Perego 2012a, 557–802; see Figure 7.1). As both cremation and inhumation tombs may contain more than one burial, the minimum number of sampled individuals is approximately 2,500, of which c. 280 were inhumed (Perego 2012a). However, the precise number cannot be established for a partial lack of published data and osteological analysis from many burial contexts as well as the poor preservation of some graves. The discovery of sporadic, incomplete and scattered non-cremated human remains not clearly ascribable to one individual or more is also attested (Perego 2012a, 244–245; Zanoni 2011).

The results presented here are a compendium of both published and unpublished research carried out primarily by the authors of this contribution. A wide range of methods and approaches have been adopted to study abnormal funerary behaviour in Iron Age Veneto. These include: a statistical analysis of a large-scale dataset comprising both inhumation and cremation graves (Perego 2012a; 2014); a statistical and contextual analysis of potentially anomalous burials deposited outside the formal burial ground, both in Veneto and neighbouring regions of northern Italy such as Emilia Romagna, Friuli, Trentino, South Tyrol and Piedmont (Zanoni 2011); an in-depth, contextual analysis of single burials and cemetery segments, or of selected samples of anomalous burials displaying specific common features (for instance, partial cremation) (Guidi and Saracino 2010; Perego 2012a; 2012b;

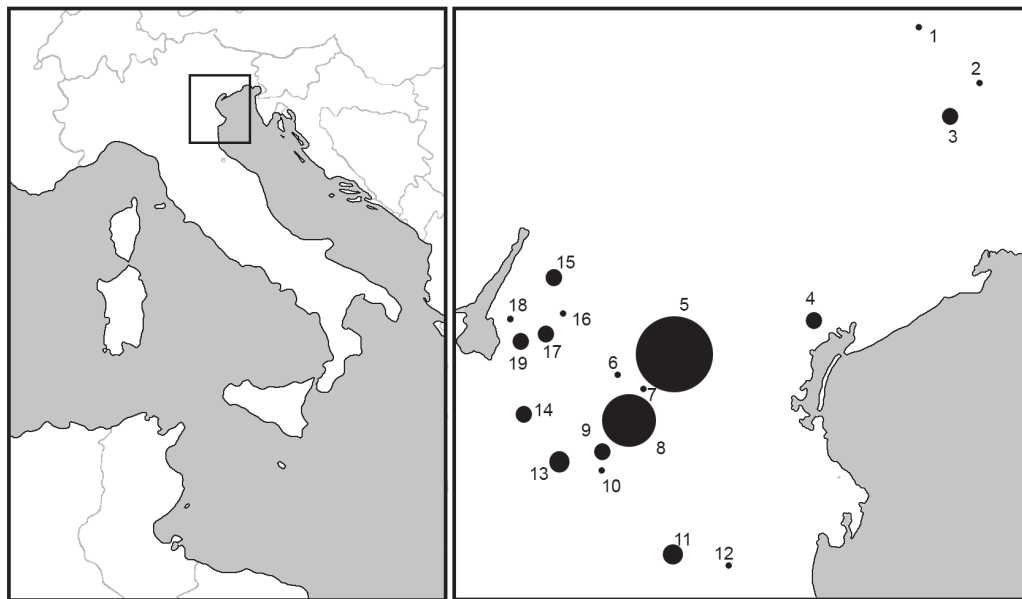


Figure 7.1. Geographical distribution of inhumation sample. 1. Montereale; 2. Concordia; 3. Oderzo; 4. Altino; 5. Padua; 6. Lozzo; 7. Ponte della Torre; 8. Este; 9. Montagnana; 10. Vallarana; 11. Frattesina; 12. Villamarzana; 13. Gazzo; 14. Oppeano; 15. Santorso; 16. Montebello; 17. Colognola; 18. Rivoli; 19. Archi di Castelrotto. The dimensions of the dots reflect the sample size (elaboration by Perego after Perego 2012a).

in press; Saracino 2009; Saracino and Zanoni 2014; Zamboni and Zanoni 2010; 2011, 202–206; Zanoni 2011); a contextual and statistical analysis of a more restricted database of inhumation and cremation graves from the main Venetic settlements of Este and Padua, with a focus on the well-known cemetery of Este Villa Benvenuti, and the use of amulets by individuals potentially in need of supernatural help or control, such as children and the sick (Perego 2010). Furthermore, fieldwork has been carried out by Saracino at the main Iron Age settlement of Oppeano within the framework of the Oppeano Project (Progetto Oppeano) directed by Alessandro Guidi (University of Roma Tre) in collaboration with Luciano Salzani (Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Veneto) (see Guidi *et al.* 2005; Guidi *et al.* 2008; Guidi and Salzani 2008; Guidi and Saracino 2010; Saracino 2009; Saracino and Sboarina 2010). Finally, we have carried out preliminary research exploring the existence of practices of marginalisation in Bronze Age Veneto since April 2013 (the ‘IN or OUT’ Project, Phase 1; for the preliminary results see for example Perego *et al.* 2013a; 2013b; Saracino *et al.* 2014). A first re-evaluation of funerary data from the proto-urban site of Frattesina, which developed not far from the Adriatic shore between the late Bronze Age and the early Iron Age, has already been developed (Saracino and Zanoni 2014; see also Saracino *et al.* 2014; below).

Analysis

The Iron Age

Research carried out to date strongly suggests that practices of marginalisation and abnormal mortuary behaviour can be recognised in the funerary record of Iron Age Veneto. Given the brevity of this contribution we can offer only a representative account of the material studied, but an overall analysis of the evidence has allowed us to recognise a series of criteria for the identification of marginality and funerary deviancy in the context examined. A first important marker of abnormality – albeit not necessarily of marginality – was the adoption of the rare inhumation rite instead of the more common incineration ritual, the latter being the only funerary rite in Veneto which up until now can be clearly associated with exceptionally rich burials located in prominent funerary areas, such as the centre of collective *tumuli* (Figure 7.2). It must be noted that very simple cremation burials are also attested: this evidence, which we cannot address fully here, reveals the complexity of Venetic funerary rituals, which also display variability in different chronological phases and at different settlements and burial areas (see Perego 2012a; 2014; in press for a further discussion; see also Balista and Ruta Serafini 1992; 1998; Capuis 2009; Chieco Bianchi *et al.* 1998; Leonardi and Cupitò 2004; 2011). As the rest of this chapter will show, the ‘poverty’ of a grave assemblage was not necessarily – or primarily – a sign of funerary deviancy or social exclusion, although it might have indeed represented a marker of abnormality in some circumstances (see below). Complex dynamics of social inclusion vis-à-vis social exclusion, not necessarily relating to the economic standing of the dead or their status, must have been at work in the context under consideration. As discussed

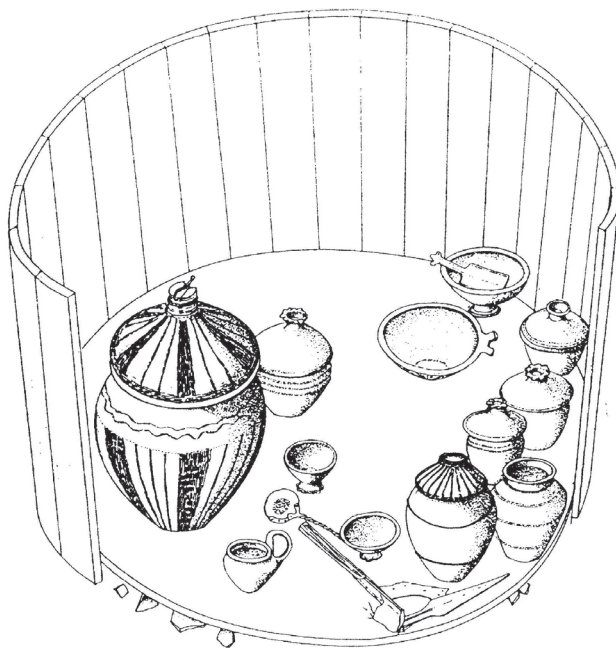


Figure 7.2. Reconstruction of cremation Tomb 159/1991 from the Via Tiepolo – Via S. Massimo cemetery of Padua (after Gambacurta 2005).

below, such dynamics may sometimes result in the adoption of practices of abuse of the corpse and/or extreme abnormal mortuary behaviour, with several deviant burial features attested in relation to a single burial.

Another potential marker of funerary marginality was the location of a burial in marginal cemetery segments (*e.g.* outside the *tumulus* edge or near the margin of a graveyard) or outside the formal burial ground, either in the settlement (Zanoni 2011) or in 'sacrificial' sites such as the Via S. Eufemia ritual area of Padua (Facciolo and Tagliacozzo 2006; Michelini 2005). To date, there is no clear evidence that any of the 280 inhumation burials sampled in Perego 2012a was placed in a prominent funerary area; furthermore, 32% of the sample is represented by burials located outside the formal burial ground (Perego 2012a, 214, 222–223; 2014; *in press*; see also Zanoni 2011).

The scarcity and especially the complete lack of (visible) grave goods was another anomalous ritual feature particularly associated with the inhumation rite; in particular, this was the case for inhumation burials displaying other anomalous characteristics, such as *displacement* (*e.g.* burial outside the formal burial ground) or abnormal body treatments (Perego 2012a; Zanoni 2011). For example, less than 5% of the several dozens of settlement burials recently sampled by Perego (2012a) and Zanoni (2011) was associated with grave goods; this percentage increases to *c.* 30–35% for inhumation burials placed in the formal burial ground and to over 90% for the cremation tombs located at main Venetic burial sites such as the well-known Benvenuti-Ricovero cemetery of Este (Perego 2012a, 219–222; Chieco Bianchi and Calzavara Capuis 1985; 2006). Inhumation burials presenting evidence of abuse and trauma (*e.g.* *pre-mortem* violence, mutilation and disarticulation) were never accompanied by grave goods (Perego 2012a; Saracino 2009; Zanoni 2011; human bodies buried intentionally incomplete amount to not less than 3% of the inhumation burials sampled in Perego 2012a).

When inhumation burials are considered, the adoption of anomalous body postures, such as the rare prone position often associated in literature with funerary deviancy, marginality and necrophobia, is also notable (Reynolds 2009; on Veneto: Perego 2012a; Saracino 2009; Zamboni and Zanoni 2010; Zanoni 2011; prone inhumations from Veneto amount to *c.* 5% of the sample collected in Perego 2012a). Notable occurrences of burials in a prone position are known, for example, from the Padua Piovego and Via Tiepolo cemeteries (Ruta Serafini 1990; Saracino 2009; Zamboni and Zanoni 2010), the ritual site of Padua Via S. Eufemia (Michelini 2005; below) and the settlement of Oppeano (Saracino 2009; below). All these burials – as well as the other prone burials sampled in Perego 2012a and Zanoni 2011 – were variously characterised by apparently 'deviant' attributes such as the absence of grave goods and/or *displacement* outside the formal cemetery. The adoption of anomalous tomb forms or tomb structures, such as the deposition in pits much larger than needed to host a human body, has also been connected to the adoption of anomalous funerary practices (Perego 2012a; Zanoni 2011). For example, the partially cremated human torso found at the Emo Capodilista-Via Umberto I cemetery of Padua was placed in a circular pit filled with charcoal (Gamba and Tuzzato 2008). The small size of the pit may indicate that the corpse was mutilated before burial.

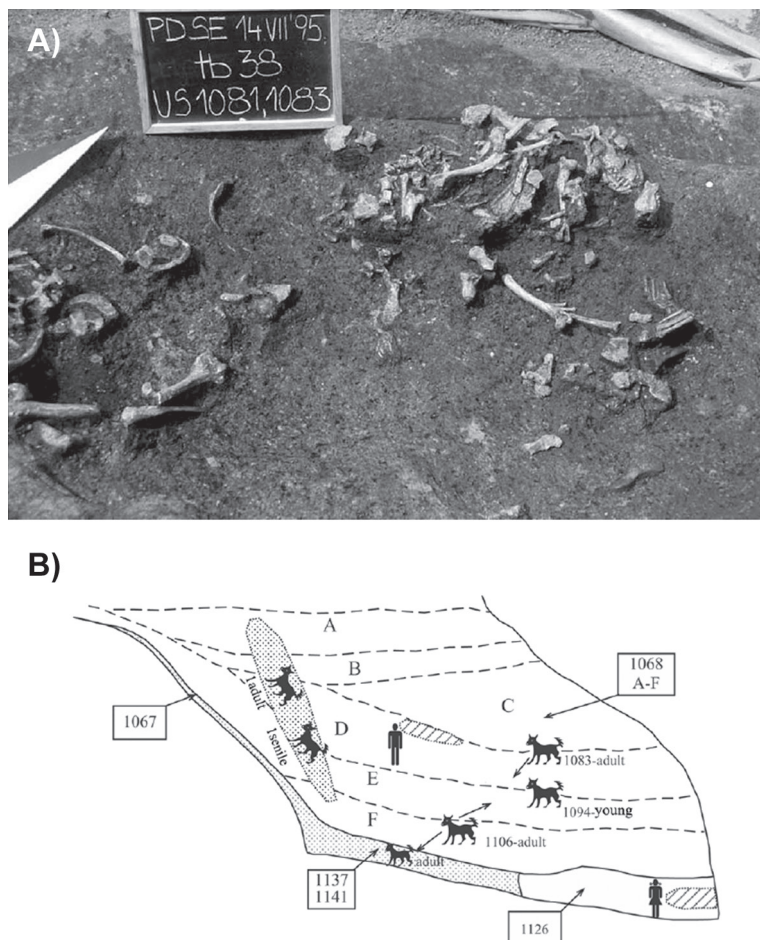


Figure 7.3. A) Photo of a ritual pit from the sacrificial site of Padua Via S. Eufemia in the course of excavation and B) relative section (elaboration by Saracino after Facciolo and Tagliacozzo 2006).

By contrast, the 20- to 25-year-old female individual displaying evidence of tooth wear and musculoskeletal stress discovered in the Colombara cemetery of Gazzo Veronese, was found prone in a pit approximately 4 meters large (Drusini 2001; Riedel and Tecchiati 2001; Salzani 2001b). The anomalous size of the burial pit and the presence inside it of horse skeletal remains have prompted a comparison between the Gazzo burial and the ritual site of Padua Via S. Eufemia (Leonardi 2004). There, both human beings and horses appear to have been subjected to a variety of similar ritual practices, including mutilation and/or disarticulation, burial in pits previously used to burn tons of wood, and an association with incomplete dog skeletons, pottery and food remains (Facciolo and Tagliacozzo 2006; Micheli 2005; Figure 7.3). The site, probably dated to the period between the eighth and the sixth century BC, has yielded the remains of 12 individuals, both women and men belonging to different age-classes. The deceased were found in anomalous body postures (*e.g.* prone), with no visible grave goods. At least two appear to have been intentionally

mutilated, buried incomplete, and/or subjected to practices of manipulation of the skeletal remains. Ongoing osteological analysis is focusing on the possibility that defleshing was carried out; this, however, remains unproven (Zanoni 2011, 22). A preliminary analysis of the evidence suggests that human sacrifice may have occurred on site (Michellini and Ruta Serafini 2005, 133).

That individuals given anomalous funerary treatments may have belonged – at least in some cases – to low-ranking social groups is firstly suggested by the poverty of their grave outfit in respect to the more complex grave assemblages accompanying cremation burials, especially the richest ones. Lower energy expenditure (Tainter 1978) may also be recognised in the adoption of simpler tomb structures, such as mere pits excavated in the ground instead of *cassetta* graves made up of stone slabs, sometimes up to 2.5–3 m in length (Chieco Bianchi 1987). If not motivated by religious or ritual reasons, the adoption of the inhumation rite itself may be significant, as cremations reaching temperatures in the range of 600–900 degrees require large amounts of wood to set up and maintain the funerary pyre (Drusini *et al.* 1998; 2001; 2006; Holck 1986). Importantly, wood may have been a restricted resource at some or most main Venetic sites during the Iron Age, as their surroundings appear to have already been cleared at the beginning of the first millennium BC (Motella De Carlo 2005). The complexity of ritual practices involving cremated remains is also notable (*e.g.* mixing of the bones belonging to more than one individual in the same cremation urn, re-opening of tomb containers to place two or more urns in the same grave: Bianchin Citton *et al.* 1998; Gambacurta 2005; Perego 2011; 2012a) and the involvement of ritual specialists cannot be excluded, especially for elite funerals. The time that a cremation takes – most of the day on an open pyre – may also have been a factor at the lower end of the social scale. As testified by the presence of pottery and banqueting implements inside or around the tomb container, elite funerals may have also been accompanied by a funerary banquet, a rite apparently not associated with the most simple inhumation burials, and certainly not with those displaying clear deviant attributes (Perego 2012a).

As noted above, also notable is the common location of simple inhumation burials on the edges or outside the burial mounds where cremation tombs were placed, sometimes in a clear hierarchical arrangement, with the richest graves in the middle (Balista and Ruta Serafini 1992; 1998). The contrast between the placing of wealthy cremation graves presumably pertaining to high-status individuals inside the formal cemetery, within the boundary of a burial mound, and the *displacement* of very simple inhumation graves appears intentional and meaningful, especially when the latter were characterised by other deviant attributes, such as the prone position. Particularly notable in this regard are burials located outside the formal burial ground, which are generally characterised by a lack of grave goods, anomalous body postures and/or peculiar body treatments, including disarticulation (Perego 2012a; Saracino 2009; Zanoni 2011; below).

From a bio-archaeological perspective, only preliminary conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the present sample, as osteological analyses are not always available and the identification of pathologies on cremated remains may be difficult. When high-standard osteological data are available, however, the recurrence on buried individuals of evidence of

pathological affections and skeletal markers of systemic illness is notable (including enamel hypoplasia, Harris lines and *cribra orbitalia*), and these may be indicative of poor nutrition standards, infection and/or starvation, especially in childhood (Danforth 1999; Mays 2010; Waldron 2009; Walker *et al.* 2009; on the Venetic evidence: Bondini 2005; Catalano *et al.* 2010; Onisto 2004; Perego 2012a; in press; 2014; Ruta Serafini 1990; Saracino 2009; Saracino and Zanoni 2014; Zanoni 2011). Occurrences of skeletal pathologies probably relating to musculoskeletal stress and work related traumas (such as Schmorl's nodes) may indicate that many buried individuals were involved in heavy and repetitive physical tasks as 'servants', 'slaves' or low-status 'workers' (Blakey 2001; Waldron 2009; on the Venetic evidence: Perego 2012a; in press; Saracino 2009; Zanoni 2011). As seen for example in one of the Oppeano burials discussed below, evidence of musculoskeletal stress may co-exist with osteological evidence of systemic illness and poor nutrition, thus reinforcing the hypothesis that these subjects belonged to low ranking social groups plagued by harsh conditions of life, including potential difficulties in accessing food sources (Catalano *et al.* 2010; Onisto 2004; Perego 2012a, 249–253; 2014; Zanoni 2011).

Moreover, the recurrence of individuals displaying evidence of disability, deformity and disease among those given an anomalous funerary treatment suggests that illness and an abnormal physical development may have led to the adoption of forms of social exclusion and even necrophobic practices, reflected in the funerary arena. Further osteological data, however, are needed to confirm this hypothesis. Among the most interesting cases is the deposition of a male individual, aged 16–20, in the settlement area of Villamarzana, a site that developed in the Final Bronze Age and the early Iron Age approximately 5 km far from the proto-urban settlement of Frattesina, to which it was culturally linked (Salzani and Consonni 2005; Zanoni 2011). The deceased was placed in a crouched position on the floor of a hut destroyed by a fire. The burial probably dates to the ninth century BC. Osteological analysis has revealed evidence of enamel hypoplasia, advanced tooth wear, a congenital lack of five teeth, a degeneration of the dental alveoli and an abnormal growth of bone tissue to compensate for the lack of the teeth. Not far away was located the incomplete skeleton of a woman, aged 40–60, laid supine and like the nearby male burial, apparently accompanied by no grave goods. An analysis of the female skeleton has disclosed evidence of musculoskeletal stress, trauma on the right tibia, a poorly healed fracture of the right fibula and periostitis (a painful inflammation of the periosteum, a tissue surrounding the bones).

Two of the most significant Venetic burials potentially indicative of social marginality have been found at Oppeano. Already known in the eighteenth century, Oppeano has been subjected to systematic archaeological research since the 1980s. Between 2000 and 2007, it was the focus of the 'Oppeano Project' (Progetto Oppeano) undertaken by the University of Verona and the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Veneto (Guidi and Salzani 2008). The settlement, located approximately 25 km south-east of modern Verona, developed on a fluvial plateau near an ancient branch of the Adige River. It flourished between the Final Bronze Age, Phase 2 (*c.* eleventh century BC), and the fifth – fourth century BC. At its maximum size, it appears to have reached an extension of *c.* 82 ha. After the fifth or fourth century, a phase of decline and depopulation is attested. The causes of



Figure 7.4. Prone burial from Oppeano – La Montara (after Salzani 2008b).

this decline remain unknown, although this may relate to the pressure of Etruscan and/or Celtic people. The cemeteries were located outside the inhabited area, south of the plateau (even though some ceramic finds in the north of the plateau may indicate the presence of tombs); their chronological span generally reflects that of the settlement (Guidi and Salzani 2008 with previous bibliography; Salzani 2008a).

In 1997, near to the north-western margin of the settlement, was found the prone burial of an individual in partial anatomical connection, with the lower limbs apparently disarticulated (Figure 7.4). The burial pit was placed under a paved road and close to a second pit holding the remains of two dogs and some ox bones. The context dates to the seventh or sixth century BC. The location of the burial in a peripheral settlement area, the anomalous treatment given to the deceased (if intentional), the association with both animal remains and a paved road may indicate the foundation sacrifice of a socially marginal individual (Riedel and Rizzi 1999; Salzani 2008b). Particularly significant is the presence of dogs among the skeletal remains: dogs were often the victims of sacrifice in late prehistoric and early Roman Italy, as well as Iron Age Veneto, and might have been conceived as ritual ‘watchdogs’ to protect the road (De Grossi Mazzorin 2008; Facciolo and Tagliacozzo 2006; Graslund 2004). Unfortunately, osteological data are not available for this burial.

In the same settlement, at the ‘ex Fornace’ site, a second prone burial has been found recently. The deceased, a 30–35-year-old man, was placed in a refuse pit, 3m deep and probably 6m wide, filled with various debris, including food remains, broken pottery and bronze objects. The pathologies (spina bifida occulta, kyphosis) and markers of systemic

and musculoskeletal stress identified on the skeleton, including Schmorl's nodes, evidence of a prominent development of the muscles of the lower limbs, Harris lines and enamel hypoplasia, have suggested that the deceased might have been a marginal individual, possibly involved in heavy physical tasks (Catalano *et al.* 2010; Guidi and Saracino, 2010; Saracino 2009). The prone posture and anomalous location of burial further underline the abnormal status of the dead and have been related to a possible execution and to the category of overkill (Guidi and Saracino 2010; Saracino 2009; Saracino and Zanoni 2014; on the concept of 'overkilling': Aldhouse-Green 2001; Green 1998; Ortalli 2010). Also notable is the fact that the dead appears to have been hit with a pointed tool approximately 6 to 8 months before death; the trauma caused a necrosis of the tissue surrounding the wound, near the lower incisors (Catalano *et al.* 2010).

The Final Bronze Age: the graveyards of Frattesina

Having detailed likely occurrences of funerary deviancy and social marginality in Iron Age Veneto, we shall now turn to the broader chronological context in which these phenomena might have developed in this region. It is possible that in north-east Italy some of these instances of abnormal mortuary behavior, perhaps relating to social marginality, may have been attested in the *longue durée*, with earlier occurrences dating back to at least the Middle Bronze Age, and later cases dating to the Roman Period and the Late Antiquity (Saracino *et al.* 2014; on prone burial at Roman Padua: Rossi 2011). In particular, the 'IN or OUT' Project, an interdisciplinary and collaborative effort led by the authors of this contribution since April 2013, has explored the appearance and meaning of deviant burials in Bronze Age Veneto, with an initial focus on the Final Bronze Age (Perego *et al.* 2013a; 2013b; Saracino *et al.* 2014). These burials can be preliminarily recognised from the anomalous funerary rite granted to the deceased and their anomalous location in the cemetery.

As far as the Final Bronze Age and the transition phase between the latter and the early Iron Age are concerned (*c.* twelfth to tenth centuries BC), some of the most notable cases have emerged from the three cemeteries surrounding the proto-urban centre of Frattesina di Fratta Polesine (Rovigo), namely Fondo Zanotto, Narde I and Narde II. The Fondo Zanotto cemetery was discovered in 1977, approximately 500 meters south-east of the settlement; it yielded 150 tombs, mostly cremations. A few inhumation burials are also attested; most are completely deprived of any funerary assemblage (De Min 1982; 1986; 1987). Narde I was found in 1985 on the opposite side of the so-called Po di Adria River, *c.* 700 meters north-west of Frattesina (Salzani 1989; 1992). It yielded 600 tombs, the vast majority of which are cremations. Narde II emerged near Narde I between 2004 and 2005, during rescue excavations undertaken by the Soprintendenza of Veneto (Salzani and Colonna 2010). It yielded approximately 240 cremation and 20 inhumation tombs, even though the value of the exceptional data recovered is partially undermined by the spatial limits of the excavation and the presence of a modern canal cutting the archaeological site (Figure 7.5). In all three cemeteries, the topography of the site is characterised by the presence of different burial clusters where numerous cremation tombs coalesced near each other. Furthermore, the stratigraphy reveals that the cremations (ceramic urns placed in burial

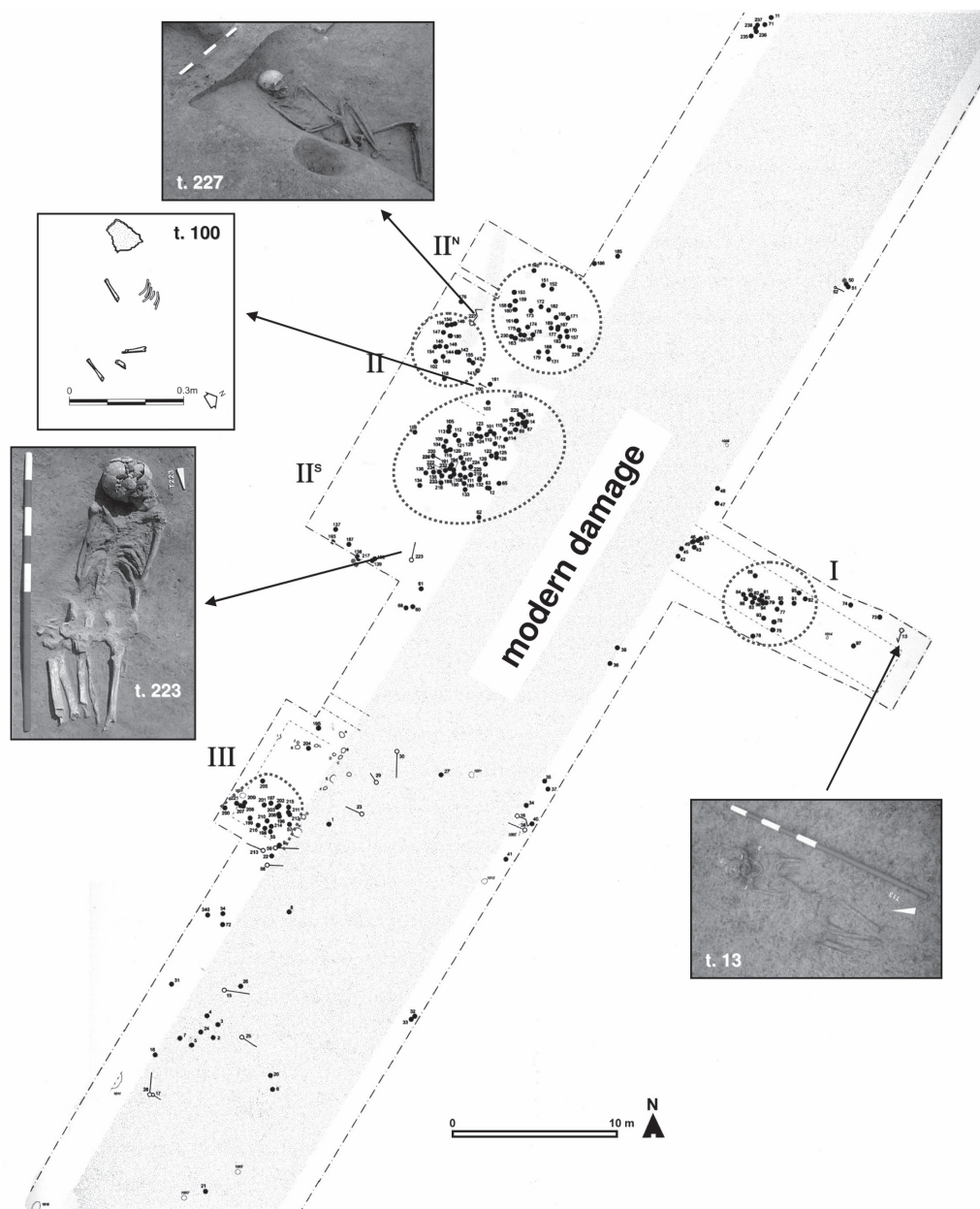


Figure 7.5. Map of Narde II cemetery with location of Tombs 223, 227 and 13 (elaboration by Saracino after Salzani and Colonna 2010).

pits excavated in the ground) were disposed of on different superimposed levels, forming earth burial mounds or *tumulus*-like structures not dissimilar to those dating to the Iron Age (*struttura ad accumulo stratificato*: Leonardi and Cupitò 2011).

At Narde II a preliminary analysis of the positioning of the inhumations in the ground has disclosed that these were usually located between 2.75 and 2.24 m above sea level. It remains unclear whether this may have a specific meaning in relation to the chronology of these burials or their placing in respect to cremation graves: the location of the latter varied between c. 3.70 and 1.70 m above sea level. Sometimes inhumations were also placed at the margins or between the clusters containing the cremations, and presumably representing the burial plots of kinship groups. As noted below, this is especially true of inhumation burials characterised by other abnormal ritual features such as the prone posture.

Among the most notable inhumation burials from Narde II are Tomb 13 from Sector 1, Tombs 100, 223 and 227 from Sector 2, and Tomb 25 from the 'Canal' (Salzani and Colonna 2010; Salzani 2010a; 2012b; see Figure 7.6). Tomb 13 was an 8-year-old child, buried prone with a north-west – south-east orientation; the deceased was accompanied by two bronze spiral rings possibly used to fasten the braid. Tomb 100 yielded the poorly-preserved remains of an infant, buried with a west-east orientation. Notably, this grave appears to have been placed in relative isolation in respect to any cremation grave located in the same sector of the cemetery. The only potential exclusion was nearby Tomb 181, an incineration deprived of any visible graves goods and whose precise chronology and stratigraphic relation to Tomb 100 remain uncertain. The same might have been true of Tomb 13 in Sector 1, although this cannot be proven beyond any doubt because of the poor preservation of the burial area. Tomb 223 was another prone burial apparently placed in isolation. The deceased, a 30- to 40-year-old male, was found with the head pointing south-west and the lower limbs flexed towards the back. Interestingly, Salzani (2010b, 300) has noted that the limbs of the deceased may have been intentionally fractured. Tomb 227 yielded the skeleton of a female individual older than 50, buried supine with a south-north orientation, and the lower limbs abnormally bent towards the pelvis. The deceased was deposited in a ditch, under a layer of charcoal pertaining to an *ustrinum* (dedicated pyre site). According to the stratigraphic and topographic data, the burial is earlier than the *ustrinum* and the group of cremations of Sector 2, although their relations remain unclear (Salzani 2010a). Finally, Tomb 25 was the burial of a sub-adult whose skeleton has shown possible evidence of growth disturbance (Salvadei and Mantini 2010, 56–58). Notably, he or she was found with the lower limbs abnormally crossed to form a sort of an 'X' (Salzani and Colonna 2010: 188). If this placing was intentional, an interesting possibility would be to link the dead individual's anomalous physical development to his or her abnormal burial posture and abnormal burial rite, which might have been motivated by necrophobia and the fear of bodily abnormality and disease.

Other notable burials are Tombs 17 and 23, whose peculiarity resided in being located at the extreme south-western margin of the burial ground, near a stone that has been interpreted as a boundary marker. Tomb 23 was the burial of a 40- to 50-year-old man, while the sex and age of the deceased from Tomb 17 were not ascertained. The latter was buried with a north-

Site	Tomb	Sex	Age
Narde I: inhumation	T.117	M	20–30
	T.594/A	M	50+
	T.594/B	F	30–40
Narde I: cremation	T.595	M	30–40
Narde II: inhumation	T.13	?	c. 8
	T.16	M	c. 30
	T.16	M	adult
	T.16A	M	adult
	T.16B	M	adult
	T.23	M	40–50
	T.25	?	13–14
	T.28	F	50+
	T.29	F	20–30
	T.30	F	30–40
	T.52	?	4–5
	T.58	M	50+
	T.59	M	c. 30
	T.223	M	30–40
	T.226	?	c. 1
	T.227	F	50+
Narde II: cremation	T.22	M	30–40
	T.32	?	c. 3
	T.44	?	10–12
	T.45	F?	15–18
	T.51	M?	c. 30
	T.53	M?	c. 30
	T.56	F?	30–50
	T.75	M	30–40
	T.76	F	20–30
	T.77	F	5–7
	T.90	M?	30–40
	T.92	M	3–4
	T.93	?	adult
	T.136	F	50+
	T.167	?	3–4
	T.169	F	adult
	T.182	F	50+
	T.187	M	c. 30
	T.197	?	4–5
	T.200	F	30–40

Table 7.2. *Biological sex and age of a sample of burials from Narde I and II (elaboration by Saracino after Salvadei and Mantini 2010).*

west – south-east orientation and had a ring under the skull. Unfortunately, the skeleton was badly damaged by modern excavation works in the area. The man from Tomb 23 was supine, with the same orientation, and the lower and upper limbs flexed. The latter were also damaged by a modern excavation. A bronze ring was found under his pelvis.

Overall, a preliminary analysis of the inhumation burials from Narde II reveals that the dead were subjected to a variety of burial treatments. The deceased may be buried prone, supine or in a flexed position, sometimes with the lower limbs unusually bent towards the pelvis or the back (*e.g.* Tombs 223 and 13). The hands were generally placed on or near the pelvis, or on the chest. The 30-year-old male from Tomb 59 was probably wrapped in a shroud. Grave goods are always limited or absent. Burial orientation varied, although *c.* 50% of the burials had the head pointing to the west (Salzani 2010b). An osteological analysis of 19 inhumation burials from Narde II (16 individuals) and Narde I (3 individuals) suggests that the adoption of the inhumation rite cross-cut sex and age categories: both female and male individuals as well as adults and children are attested (Salvadei and Mantini 2010; see Table 7.2). This is in line with our findings for the Iron Age (Perego 2012a; Saracino 2009; Saracino and Zanoni 2014; Zanoni 2011). Female, male and child burials are also attested among those who were cremated: so, it appears that at Frattesina sex and age were not fundamental factors in determining the adoption of one funerary rite (inhumation) in place of another (cremation). Again, this matches the evidence known from the Iron Age (Gamba *et al.* 2013; Perego 2012a with previous bibliography).

At both Frattesina and later Iron Age sites from Veneto, however, it is rare or extremely rare for foetuses and neonates to be granted the cremation rite (Salvadei and Mantini 2010; for a full dataset: Perego 2012a). This situation finds a comparison in other protohistoric cemeteries from northern Italy (Cavazzuti 2010) and may indicate that infants were denied formal burial, or formal cremation burial in cemetery contexts, possibly because of their premature death. This is not entirely surprising given the recurrent – albeit not universal – existence of forms of social marginalisation based on age, both in many societies worldwide and in ancient Italy (Finlay 2000; Nizzo 2011; Scheper Hughes 2004; on the burial of infants in settlement areas in pre-Roman and Roman Italy: Carroll 2011; 2012; Gaio 2005; Zanoni 2011). In Veneto, the recurrent presence of buried infants in marginal cemetery segments and outside the formal burial ground during the Iron Age, and especially from the fifth century BC, may also be significant (Perego 2014; Zanoni 2011). It must be noted, however, that some occurrences of neonatal cremation burials are known from different Venetic cemeteries (Drusini *et al.* 2006). Therefore, while the burial treatment given to very young children may indicate that age was among the criteria determining the adoption of practices of marginalisation in Venetic funerary contexts, additional research is needed to further substantiate this hypothesis.

Conclusion

This paper has proposed a methodological and theoretical framework for the identification of social marginality in funerary archaeological contexts. While a review of anthropological research on social exclusion and marginalisation may be useful to propose a definition of these phenomena and their cultural meaning, an analysis of the archaeological and bio-archaeological aspects of a burial offers interesting insights into the life history of the deceased and their anomalous conditions of life or death. Research focusing on the so-called ‘deviant burials’ indicates that graves characterised by abnormal features falling outside the social norm may be indicative of the condition of social exclusion of the dead, or of the adoption of rituals of marginalisation by their burying group. An in-depth analysis of osteological data can shed light on practices of abuse and degradation of the corpse, homicide, ritual killing, human sacrifice and necrophobia as well as occurrences of *pre-mortem* violence, starvation, disease and malnutrition, which might relate to social marginality. Disease itself may also cause exclusion and marginalisation.

In the second part of this chapter we have begun to apply these methodological considerations to burial data from first-millennium BC Veneto. Our analysis of a dataset of more than 2,000 graves from this region has cast light on the existence of abnormal burial practices falling outside the ritual norm of this cultural context. These included the adoption of the rare inhumation rite instead of the more common incineration ritual and the deposition of the buried deceased in anomalous contexts such as abnormally large or small burial pits, dump and settlement areas, marginal cemetery segments, and sacrificial sites where human sacrifice might have been carried out alongside the slaughtering of

animals and food consumption. When inhumation burials are considered, the scarcity or absence of grave goods, the adoption of abnormal burial postures instead of the more common supine position, and other anomalous body treatments are also indicative of the abnormal status of a deposition. Notably, many of these deviant attributes tend to recur together, thus reinforcing the hypothesis that some individuals in late prehistoric Veneto did not receive normative burial, and might have been marginalised by their community.

Variability in the adoption of abnormal mortuary practices – some of them more ‘extreme’ than others – seems to indicate that different individuals might have been marginalised by their burying group to different degrees. Also, it cannot be excluded that different forms of marginalisation were at work in relation to diverse aspects of the dead individual’s identity and social standing (for example, gender, ethnicity, age or social ‘class’, see below), or even in relation to the structure of Venetic society itself, and its development over time. These issues, which we cannot fully develop here for their complexity, deserve further consideration (although see Perego 2012a; 2014; in press). Nonetheless, particularly significant are occurrences of mutilation, disarticulation, burial in a prone position, partial cremation and possible evidence of binding, which may testify to practices of human sacrifice, degradation of the corpse, coercion, necrophobia, execution, and *peri-mortem* violence. In turn, these forms of abuse might relate to the abnormal status of the deceased in life or immediately before death, although it is difficult to understand in every case the reasons which led to the adoption of these practices. Notably, however, the potential acts of violence that were sometimes associated with burials subject to such practices seem to point to the existence of an intentional ‘marginalising’ intention on the part of the burying group (see above our discussion about the concepts of ‘involuntary’ marginality and marginalisation; on the role of violence in Venetic rituals see Perego in press). Furthermore, the association between ritual areas, such as the Via S. Eufemia sacrificial site at Padua, and burials whose abnormal features appear to indicate the adoption of practices of ritual killing, raises questions about how socially marginal people may have become important to a community as foundation or human sacrifices. Hence, their marginality, or perhaps more accurately, their death as marginal or ‘liminal’ beings, might have been vital to the safeguarding of the non-marginal community.

A preliminary analysis of infant burials suggests that age may have also played a role in dynamics of marginalisation, although further research is needed to substantiate this hypothesis. Osteological analysis – when available – seems also to indicate that individuals subjected to abnormal mortuary rituals may have been variously plagued by harsh conditions of life, disease, handicap, excessive workloads and food deprivation. This suggests that belonging to low-ranking and disadvantaged communities, and/or an abnormal physical development, may have been factors linked to social exclusion in the context under study. An interesting case is that of the male individual from Oppeano ex Fornace: the dead individual’s poor health status, including skeletal evidence of deformity (hunchback) and excessive workload, is interestingly associated with evidence of *pre-mortem* violence and abnormal mortuary behaviour (settlement burial, burial in the prone posture). Again, this evidence – as well as that relating to similar depositions where several deviant burial

features recur together – points towards more extreme forms of marginalisation than those potentially attested in connection to inhumation burials deposited in the formal burial ground and accompanied by a grave assemblage – as simple as the latter might be. In this regard, it cannot be excluded that at least in some cases inhumation rites were intentionally selected by limited segments of the community (see Perego 2012a; in press). If this was the case, this practice might have represented a form of ‘voluntary marginalisation’, chosen by these people to underline their diversity from those adopting cremation – an issue that deserves further investigation.

While our analysis of social exclusion has mainly focused on the first half of the first millennium BC, a preliminary scrutiny of burial data going back to the Final Bronze Age and the transition phase between the Final Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age indicates that practices of social marginalisation, reflected in the mortuary record, may have already developed at some Venetic sites before the beginning of the Iron Age (see also Saracino *et al.* 2014 for a preliminary analysis of burial data dating to the whole Bronze Age of Veneto). In conclusion, despite difficulties in understanding and discriminating between different ‘shades’ of marginality, we believe that this chapter highlights the potential of a methodological and theoretical framework that focuses on research questions rarely asked in archaeology today, especially in Italian archaeology.

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PREHISTORIC MALTESE DEATH: DEMOCRATIC THEATRE OR ELITE DEMOCRACY?

Simon Stoddart and Caroline Malone

Introduction

Malta is well known for its elaborate prehistoric monuments which reached a flamboyant finale in the centuries approaching 2400 BC (Figure 8.1). In the ritual practised in these monuments, a clear uncontroversial distinction can be made between life-centred rituals in the monuments constructed above ground (often called *temples*) (Figure 8.1A) and the death-centred rituals in monuments excavated underground (often called *hypogea*) (Figure 8.1B). However, this chapter proposes for the first time a debate over the nature of the embedded social structure behind the funerary practice. This follows on from the longer-standing suggestion that ritual practice in the above ground monuments became more socially restricted in the later phases of use (Anderson and Stoddart 2007; Evans 1976–77). One interpretation stresses the full participation, without restriction, of all members of the small scale society in the ritual scenography, be it above ground or below ground. An alternative interpretation stresses restricted access to monuments based on emergent distinctions in status or perhaps some other principle of identity. This chapter briefly presents the evidence for the funerary monuments in terms of these radically different modes of body manipulation without repeating the arguments which have been recently rehearsed elsewhere (see Malone *et al.* 2009).

Informed knowledge of Maltese funerary ritual in the fourth and third millennium BC is essentially based on the excavation of one site, the Brochtorff Circle at Xaghra which has recently been exhaustively published (Malone *et al.* 2009) and interpreted over a period of time (Stoddart 1999; Stoddart *et al.* 1999; Stoddart and Malone 2010). In brief, recently deceased bodies were brought into a protected cave system within a megalithic circle, displayed, and then most were disarticulated after the decay of flesh, and distributed into the more peripheral parts of the cave system. A very small percentage of the recently deceased bodies remained *in situ* and anatomically correct in stratigraphic sequence, until

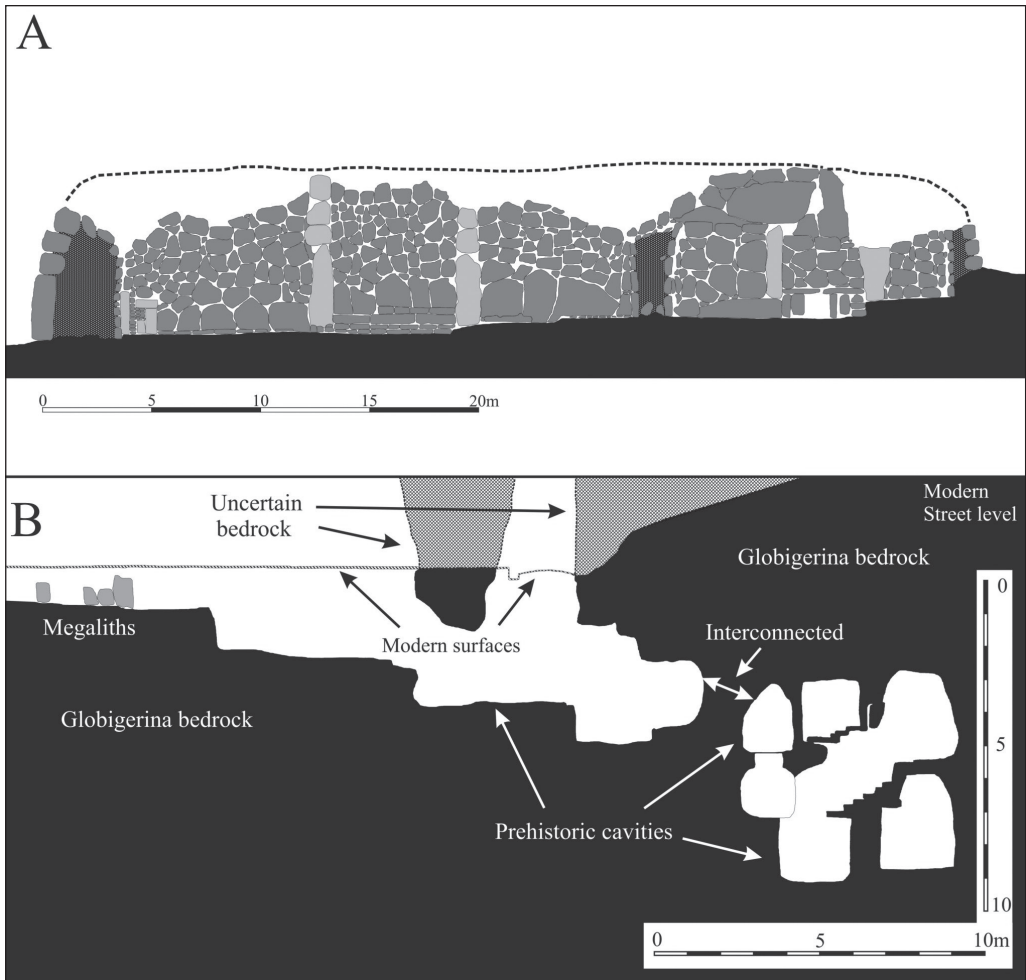


Figure 8.1. Cross sections of examples of above-ground and below-ground monuments. A. *Ggantija* temple. B. *Hal-Saflieni hypogeum*.

archaeological discovery, headed by male depositions at the bottom of the sequence. Some of the originally displayed bodies may have been brought into the cave system with symbolic representations of themselves, small corpulent terracotta figurines, or human heads carved onto animal phalanges; these remained exclusively in the display area, left behind when larger body parts were moved, as residual elements along with peripheral parts of the human body. A further key element of the organisation of this megalithic circle was the presence of a sacred storage area, or sacristy, where ritual artefacts were stored before and after use. Some were portable and hand-held and presided actively with the aid of human agency over the mortuary ritual; most notably these were plaque figures with developed human

heads and skirts, easily held in the human hand (Stoddart *et al.* 1993; Stoddart in press). Another was a small pair of corpulent figures seated on a couch which would have presided, without human agency, over the mortuary rituals. A final feature of the site is that it appears to have been ritually closed at the end of its use as a mortuary enclosure. A prominent statue, just short of life size, was deliberately destroyed, and there is a good case that the sacred storage area or sacristy was deliberately refilled with the precious ceremonial objects.

This chapter will focus on the evidence provided by the Xaghra monument for this flamboyant final phase of monument use. The authors will not rehearse discussions published elsewhere (*e.g.* Malone *et al.* 2009), but it is worth emphasising how the two classes of life and death monument were interlinked in a double liturgy of transition. Reuben Grima (2001) has convincingly suggested that the above ground monuments were portals for travellers between the external *continental*¹ world of Italy and the internal *island* world of Malta and Gozo. In a chapter of the recent publication of the only known surviving substantial deposits of Tarxien date (*c.* 3000–2400 BC) human remains from Malta (Grima *et al.* 2009), we combined forces with Grima to suggest that the underground funerary monuments provided a conceptually parallel portal for travel from this world to the next, a transition equally enshrouded in risk as well as, like any sea voyage, accompanied, depending on belief, by potential reward, in this case cosmological rather than material.

Access to burial

Access to formal (and preserved) burial is one of the most important distinctions in burial practice which may or may not be associated with special status or identity. The retention, that is the active intentional manipulation, of the bodily remains – of sufficient eternity to enable archaeological discovery – was clearly a minority practice in many cultures. It is a basic fact that most human remains do not survive to provide data for archaeologists. The interplay of access to formal burial and social structure has been studied both in complex state organised societies (Morris 1987) and in contexts similar to those of prehistoric Malta (Shanks and Tilley 1982). Morris showed the competing strategies between elite and non-elite in maintaining and reducing social distinctions, suggesting that it depends on the moment in the cycle whether such distinctions are visible at any one moment in political development. Shanks and Tilley suggested that the material practices of preceding ideological structures may have been retained to mask emerging distinctions of power. In the case of prehistoric Malta, we lack the full evidence of the historical succession of burial practices to examine the application of the ideas of Morris, but we can consider the relevance of the views of Shanks and Tilley to late Neolithic Malta, already applied to potentially similar conditions in Neolithic Wessex. To this we can add the possibility that a particular descent group, perhaps seeking to associate itself with an earthbound island

1 It is worth noting here that, in terms of cognitive mapping, geography is in the mind of the beholder. For the scale of the prehistoric islanders of Malta, Sicily, with a surface area more than fifty times the size of their homeland, and dominated by a high volcano, had a continental appearance while the peninsula disappeared north into what even modern Italians define as continental Italy.

identity, may have chosen to mark that association by distinctive monumental burial within the monumental mass of the very island itself.²

The burial data

Two substantial burial monuments dating to the period approaching 2400 BC survive in prehistoric Malta. The first, Hal-Saflieni, is carved directly out of the immediately *local*³ globigerina limestone and survives as a highly impressive architectural skeleton framework. The site remains simply an architectural framework (Figure 8.1B), an empty shell, because unfortunately, when found at the beginning of the last century, the human remains were almost completely dispersed without effective recording, and we only have a partial record of the disposition of the surviving liturgical artefacts that accompanied these remains. The father of Maltese archaeology, Themistocles Zammit, made a very good job – for the time – of recovering any lingering information that was still available to him (Zammit 1928), and this was systematised later into a broad understanding of the lost deposits (Evans 1971). More recent work at the time of the modern conservation of the monument has recovered some further information particularly from the entrance area, but much of the damage had already been done (Pace 2000). The second, the Brochtorff Circle at Xaghra (Figure 8.2), was also partly cleared in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the surviving record consists of only two watercolours and the preparatory pencil and ink drawings by de Brochtorff. This monument was, however, reinvestigated by a joint Anglo-Maltese project in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the published data (Malone *et al.* 2009) provide a complementary source to the architectural evidence which survives from Hal-Saflieni (Figure 8.1). Indeed the Xaghra evidence provides the only information on the process of manipulating human remains.

A notable characteristic of the majority of the burial deposits in both these monuments is disarticulation. The archaeologist is faced with substantial numbers of body parts which, given the calcareous context of Maltese geology and apparent lack of subsequent movement following disarticulation, appear to survive relatively intact, unaffected by further fragmentation or other taphonomic effects. The broad issue of interpreting disarticulated deposits is currently a major methodological focus of archaeological research in the French world of osteology (Duday 1978; Duday 2006; Duday 2009; Sauzade and Duday 1983) where large deposits have also been discovered which require rational ordering. This tradition has been entitled ‘anthropologie du terrain’ or ‘archaeoethanatology’, and concentrates on important methodological issues such as taphonomy in defining secondary burial (Duday 2009, 6). In common with other traditions, it presents data as Number of Identified Specimens (NISP) and Minimum Numbers of Individuals (MNI) and attempts to show primary and secondary linkages of body parts (Duday 2009, 123–125). However, the

2 We owe a version of this suggestion to Mike Parker Pearson in reaction to a lecture delivered by one of us in Sheffield in March 2011.

3 In other words, other island resources such as coralline limestone were not transported to the site to make the monument more impressive.

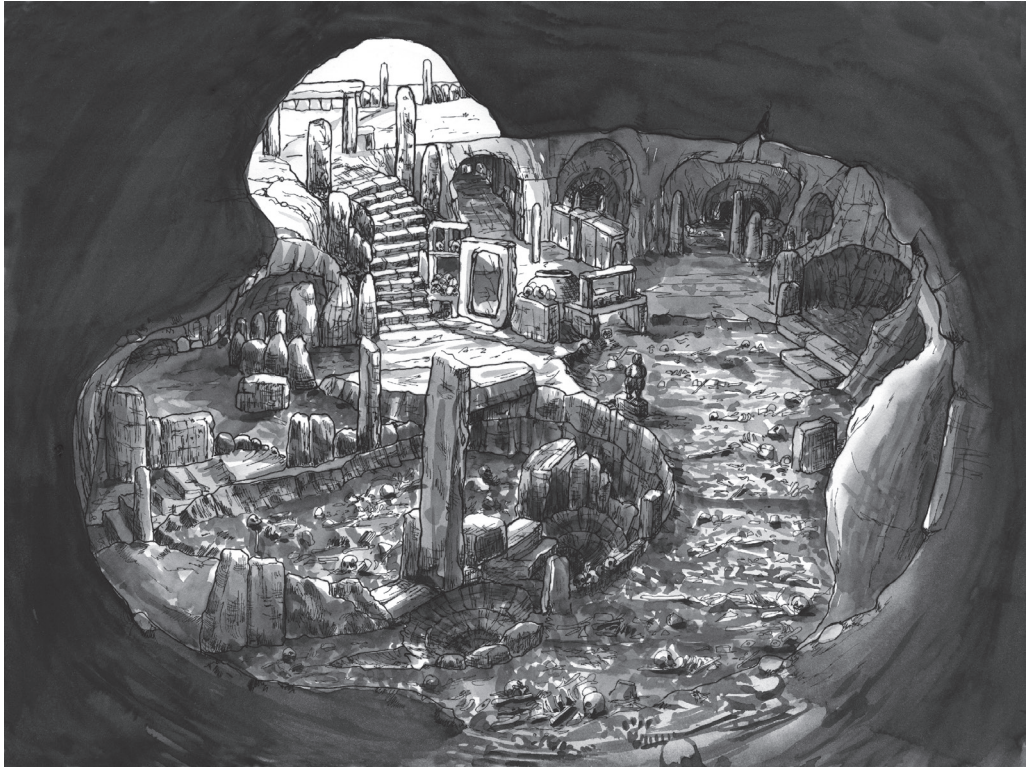


Figure 8.2. An artist's interpretation of the Brochtorff Circle at Xaghra.

ordering of bones should not merely be osteological and taphonomic but should go beyond '*l'anthropologie du terrain*' to employ the theoretical insights of cultural anthropology, which may assist the archaeologist in defining a cultural as well as procedural, mechanical explanation. The results of social anthropology assist us in the release from modern perceptions of death. An example of one such modern perception is disgust in response to death, which social anthropological work in Madagascar has gone some way to mollify (Kus 2010). Another example is Melanesian work on the parallel processing of the cycle of life and the cycling of bones (Mosko 1983; Stoddart in press).

The *anthropologie du terrain* analysis has noted some similar patterns to those seen in the Maltese evidence, but without the addition of a cultural anthropological interpretation. In the Neolithic deposit of La Boucle in Southern France, bundle burials of long bones and skull piles were distinguished from *pourrissoir* (decomposition) deposits where the body was left to decay and (although understated) to be displayed, and were characterised by intact bodies and residual body parts. The study of manipulation here remains a technical exercise without the application of meaning. A revealing statement from this tradition is: 'it is important to underline once more that with the help of texts it is possible for us

to understand rites and that without them our study is limited to behaviour and burial practices' (Duday 2009, 117). The introduction of anthropological theory assists us in defining understanding where texts do not exist. The *anthropologie du terrain* tradition reveals a self perception of inferiority of interpretation in the absence of historical evidence. The addition of ethnographic analysis from fieldwork in Melanesia and Madagascar offers the opportunity to integrate meanings based on orality in non-urban communities. The minority interest groups represented in most pre-modern literate sources are no longer privileged, and the multiple meanings of bone manipulations in pre-urban communities can be expressed.

The prehistoric Maltese deposits are some of the largest prehistoric funerary deposits from Europe. The numbers from Hal-Saffieni (Figure 8.1B) were famously estimated by Zammit to represent several thousand (Zammit 1925, 35) individuals based on the excavation of the remains of a minimum number of 119 individuals from a nearly 4m³ area (Zammit 1909–10; Zammit 1910, 35–37). These estimates from Hal-Saffieni should perhaps be viewed with caution, although the direct calculations from the Brochtorff Circle at Xaghra are still impressive. Even if the Tarxien remains from the Circle are assumed to be absolutely contemporary there is a NISP: MNI ratio of about 190,000: 437 (patella). By contrast many measures of deposition in the more cramped British Neolithic tombs are much lower: 40+ at Hazleton, 20+ at Ascott under Wychwood (Whittle *et al.* 2007a, 130), 36 at Fussell's Lodge (Wysocki *et al.* 2007, 67), 36 at West Kennet (Bayliss *et al.* 2007, 86) and 14 from the better of the excavated chambers at Wayland's Smithy (Whittle *et al.* 2007b).

The French tradition of *anthropologie du terrain* has recorded assemblages of NISP: MNI of 20,000: 70 from Neolithic La Boucle (Duday 2009, 108) and 120,000: 90 from the Chalcolithic dolmen of Les Peirrières in the South of France (Duday 2009, 134–135). As discussed elsewhere (Malone and Stoddart 2009, 378–379), in the south of France, on the lower courses of the Rhone, hypogea of the Vaucluse Drome group achieve some substantial scale either in number of inhumations or architectural complexity (Beyneix 2003; Chambon 2000). At Boileau à Sarrian, 350 individuals were buried in an oval chamber of relatively modest proportions (4.3 × 3 m). At the site of Capitaine à Grillon 176 individuals were buried in a much larger rectangular chamber (16 × 7 m), making it the largest known hypogeum in France, at some 100 square metres, where the crouched burials in one layer were accompanied by considerable quantities of steatite beads and distinctive pendants. However, only the collective tomb of the rock shelter of Sanguinouse shows some evidence of similar manipulation of human bones, within a partly natural and partly embellished cave of the type that dominates the Maltese evidence (Sauzade and Duday 1983), albeit on a very much smaller scale. In the Iberian peninsula most collective burials (including those at Los Millares) are on a smaller scale, although exceptionally, numbers can reach towards 200 individuals as at La Pijotilla 1 (Solana de los Barros, Badajoz) (Hurtado and Hunt 1999, 257), Cueva Carada (Huéscar, Granada) (Molina 1983) and Monte Canelas (Algarve, Portugal) (Morán and Perreira 2004, 37). The most extreme scale was present in northern Spain at San Juan ante Portam Latinam (Laguardia, Álava) where 378 individuals

were identified (Vegas 2007) and in Portugal where a minimum number of 419 individuals were recovered including 123 pre-adults (Silva and Ferreira 2008).

A further characteristic of the Maltese deposits is that they appear to represent an expected profile of mortality of age and sex in the Neolithic. The sexes are relatively balanced, allowing for the prominence of some males at the basal level of some deposits. More unusually, there are very substantial numbers of pre-adult remains, approaching 50% of the MNI in some instances. This is the expected mortality rate for early agricultural populations (Chamberlain 1997), but it is relatively unusual to find pre-adult remains so well preserved by cultural design, as well as resisting natural processes of decay. By contrast, not all other sites studied in this manner, as for example La Boucle (Duday 2009, 119–120), Fussell's Lodge (26 adults and 8 children) (Wysocki *et al.* 2007, 67) and West Kennet (27 adults and 9 children) (Bayliss *et al.* 2007, 86–87) had many children present, even allowing for possibly worse conditions of preservation.

Studies reported elsewhere (Malone and Stoddart 2009; Stoddart and Malone 2010), and summarised above, have suggested that the burial circle was the locale of a major rite of passage. The process appears to have been that intact recently deceased bodies were brought into the circle and in most cases then – as part of a ritual process – deliberately disarticulated once displayed, and the flesh had decayed, as they were merged with a corporate ancestry, with the exception of a few male founding members of the ancestral genealogies. This interpretation has left a number of key issues unresolved, notably the tempo of this activity and the level of participation and contribution by the living community. These two issues are particularly important for understanding the nature of bone manipulation.

In a recent review of the evidence provided by this excavation, Mike Parker Pearson (2012) has suggested a variation on the theme originally proposed. He suggests that there may have been a deliberate, that is intentional, process of mummification in the mortuary complex. We may even infer that the mummies were – long after death – recognisable individual ancestors. Furthermore, these identifiable mummies may even have been theatrically broken asunder in the 'iconoclastic' closure event of the use of the Circle as a funerary locale. This event is already signalled within the underground cave complex by the destruction of an idealised standing skirted image of near human proportions. In his methodological inspiration for this practice Parker Pearson draws broadly on the *anthropologie du terrain* tradition (Maureille and Sellier 1996). He bases his interpretation on the retention of articulation of the vulnerable body extremities, whereas major, taphonomically more stable, limb bones and skulls have been removed. However, he adds (by an implication not fully drawn out in his short review of the publication of the excavation) his own invaluable ethnographic experience in Madagascar. We can thus integrate the methodological exactitude of the *anthropologie du terrain* approach with the theoretically more creative indications of the anthropological record. For us, it is the celebration of the cycle of life at the scale of both individual and descent groups that governs the early Maltese symbolic understanding, and this meaning emerges from anthropological reasoning and ethnographic comparison not solely from a methodological sequencing of bones or from written sources which did not appear in the Maltese islands until nearly two millennia later.

The tempo of ritual

One thread of recent research on British Neolithic human bone depositions has concentrated on chronological precision. This work on their tempo suggests that 'All the mortuary structures, chambers and cists in question seem to have been used for the deposition of human remains for a century or less' (Whittle *et al.* 2007a, 129). Furthermore there may be evidence of intensification over the course of time (Whittle *et al.* 2007a). Initial impressions of the Maltese evidence suggest that a similar short chronology of intensification may also have been present. The number of radiocarbon dates for the Tarxien burial deposits are many fewer (partly because of the difficult conditions of carbon preservation in tough Mediterranean environments), but, where available, they also seem to cluster in a relatively short period of time, that is possibly the last three hundred years of the cultural phase, while the level of intensification (measured by the number of bones) is substantially greater. Whether the apparent higher level of intensification is a product of the greater length of time only greater precision of dating will reveal (and this may shortly be forthcoming as a result of two European Research Council projects headed by Alasdair Whittle (*The Times of Their Lives*) and Caroline Malone (*FRAGSUS*) respectively). In our opinion, it is likely that further radiocarbon dating will reduce this period of time considerably, although we cannot yet judge whether that will be as few as three generations, as is the case in the British Isles.

The level of participation and contribution by the living community

The age and sex profile of the human remains at Xaghra seem to reflect the likely life courses and sex ratios of a Neolithic community, but it is more difficult to judge how that buried community relates to the full living community. The living community has had less research addressed to it than the ritualised community, be it living or dead. The preservation of living sites, in contrast to the monumental remains of 'temples' and mortuary enclosures, is much more delicate and only some seven possible open air domestic structures contemporary with the temple period have been securely identified in the Maltese islands (Malone *et al.* 2009); although the more extensive surveys of Gozo (Veen and Van der Blom 1992) suggest a higher number of sites, there remain severe problems of geomorphology and intensive land use in defining precisely the density of occupation. In the absence of secure evidence for domestic occupation, proxies have been elaborated by Renfrew (1973) and more recently Clark (1998; 2004) to calculate the potential population levels on Malta and more specifically Gozo. From these calculations, we reach a figure of 1400–1800 individuals living in Gozo at the time of the mortuary ritual at the Brochtorff Circle of Xaghra. The inhabitants of the immediate area of the Xaghra plateau may have been rather less (as little as 300?), but at present only one monumental circle is known from the island, and thus it may have served the whole island community.

Standard statistics (Boddington 1987) can be applied to the mortuary data to indicate the expected size of the contributing population (Table 8.1):

	Length of use (years): t	Number of burials (including pre-adult): B'	Expected age of death at birth: e(0)	Estimated size of contributing population: P
Upper estimate	500	2103	45	189.2
Probable estimate	600	2103	25	87.6
Lower estimate	700	823	20	23.5
Current estimate A	300	823	25	68.6
Current estimate B	300	450	25	25

Table 8.1. A range of estimates of the potential size of the population contributing to the burials at the Brochtorff Circle at Xaghra, achieved by varying the expected age at death, the number of burials (according to the different criteria in Figure 3) and the length of time.

$$P = \frac{e(0)}{B'} t$$

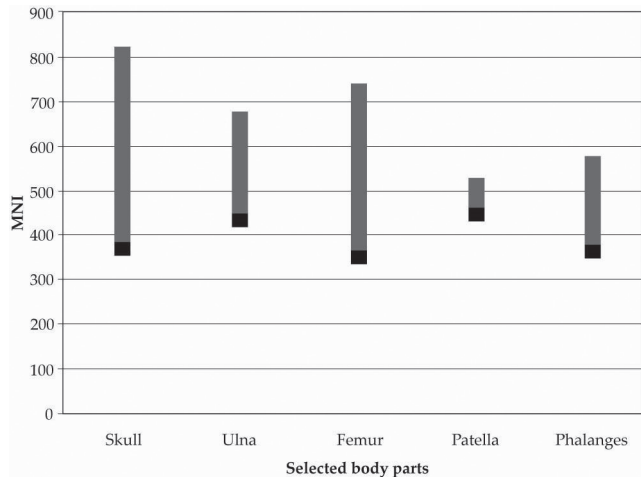
where P is the estimated contributing population, e(0) is the expected age at death, B' the number of burials, and t the length of time.

The table applies a range of different assumptions to the data, allowing for loss of burials, ranges in time of use, and different estimates of age at death. The most likely estimates are situated at the bottom of the table where the main variation is between a MNI of *c.* 800 which maximises the phasing of the burials, and *c.* 400 which assumes that they are all from one chronological phase (Figure 8.3). Whatever these variations, a clear conclusion is that the size of the contributing population to the burials was very much smaller than the probable living population of the island and even of the local community of Xaghra.

This conclusion gives rise to at least two and probably more interpretations of the relationship between the contributing population and the archaeological signature. Both these have important implications for the manipulation of bones. On the one hand, we can read the archaeological evidence in a straightforward way, namely that at any one time there was a small contributing population distinguished by identity within a particular descent group or status, or perhaps some interlinkage of the two, namely a dominant descent group, perhaps made up of ritual specialists. On the other hand, the megalithic monument could be simply the scenery for a massive operation of liturgical theatricality, through which the whole community was pushed as it died, leaving intact corpses only in the lower stratigraphic regions, and distributing body parts after anatomical display into other parts of the landscape where preservation was unlikely. These alternatives can now be considered in more detail.

The first variation of the small burying group can be entitled the *elite eternity* model. The members of this group would not necessarily be closely bounded by kin relations, since new elite members could be incorporated on other grounds, such as ritual prowess or navigational skills. Under this model, the apparent *democratic* inclusiveness of burial for all ages and sexes, was in reality denied because only a small proportion of society was

Figure 8.3. A range of estimates of MNIs (Minimum numbers of Individuals) present in the Brochtorff Circle at Xaghra. The upper estimates assume that each context has a different date, and that the MNIs can be summed. The lower estimates clump together all the Tarxien period deposits and take no account of phasing.



included in the ritual process. Non-members of the elite were denied burial in a formal monumental and megalithic context, since there was only one (or at least very few) such contexts on the island of Gozo (and only one other known on the island of Malta; Figure 8.1B). In this interpretation, male ancestors had the primary and privileged access to the deeper parts of the earth, and were only followed by women and other men, and then children, in a series of layers of decreasing depth, both vertically and horizontally into the cave system (Malone and Stoddart 2013). This was a male-led society, probably developing out of subversion of the ritual process in the adjoining temples, perhaps supported by specialist maritime activities for the few leaders of canoe expeditions to the outside world. Those who successfully accessed the portals to the outside Mediterranean had differential access to the portals of the other world beyond life, as they did to other knowledge beyond the waters of the Mediterranean in the *continent* of Sicily and adjoining Italy (cf. Helms 1988; 1992).

The second variation of the small burying group can be entitled the *indigenous extended descent group* model. The members of this group would be closely linked by kin relations, although marriage into the group would be a very strong possibility. Under this model the issue of masking of elite differences would be less problematic, and it may be that a particular descent group or descent groups in the relatively non-hierarchical societies of Malta specialised in the ‘social division of sanction’ (Dubreuil 2010, 166) based on ritually prescribed frameworks. Furthermore, this same descent group or descent groups may have deliberately associated themselves with the indigenous cave-like rock of Gozo (Parker Pearson pers. comm. 2011), stressing their association with its local island identity by burying their dead in a monumentalised version of the islandscape. As explored elsewhere in more detail (Malone and Stoddart 2013) material and metaphorical manipulation cannot be restricted narrowly to bones alone. Bones were only one class of material culture, albeit very personal in nature. The prehistoric populations of Malta manipulated ‘caves’ above and below ground. This is another example of how ethnography allows us to think creatively about prehistoric

categorisations. Caves for the modern world are defined as a below-ground phenomenon. For the prehistoric Maltese, the so-called temples above ground may have delivered many deliberately cave like qualities: such as an enclosed roofed space, evocation of pools of water, darkness, deliberately placed deposits from another world and much more.

Both these two variations can be read from a remarkably similar interpretation of the archaeological record where there would have been very little leakage of human bones into the world outside the circle once they had been brought in for burial. This interpretation can be greatly aided by the elucidatory qualities of Melanesian ethnography. In this reconstruction about 450 bodies were brought into the mortuary complex each accompanied by an offering bowl, and 'deconceived' (Mosko 1983) by this act of transition into the Circle. The reader will note that the estimated number of 450 offering bowls match the lower estimates of 450 bodies (Table 8.1). In common with many ethnographic accounts of death, there was no finality in death but an enduring cyclical eternity, where the apparent end of life was merged with the enduring descent groups of the community. A minority of the burials, substantially male in gender, were left *in situ*, stacked in significant parts of the cave system, at the entrance, under stored ritual paraphernalia at the centre, and in the deepest part of the cave. The majority were displayed for a liminal period perhaps undergoing mummification and then incorporated within the descent/elite group ancestry and memorialised as part of that small group without individuality. These bones were redistributed in significant parts of the cave system, perhaps as part of a theatrical event, as tightly held mummified bodies were dismantled.

The second major scenario is substantially different, since it proposes the serial processing of a much larger community, and can be entitled the *democratic theatre* model. Under this reconstruction there is no limit to the number of bodies which were or could be introduced into the burial circle, but apart from a small number of indicative individuals buried deep in the stratigraphy, these bodies were only temporarily displayed, then in part redisplayed in a more corporate state, before being pumped through into the world outside the Circle and dememorialised, leaving only community memories and identity behind within the Circle itself – recorded by the generalised images which we have preserved in the material culture of the time. Once again Melanesian ethnography can help our interpretation, guiding us into a series of theatrical stages of the transformation of the individual: losing breath, retaining body and then finally only retaining an image (Battaglia 1990; 1992), that itself dissolves into a generalised community ideal. In Sabarl island society there is a constant interplay between material and visual images, that gives credence to the wider importance of such concerns. This interpretation draws on the liturgical theatricality provided by the contained space and presided over by living individuals who guided the ceremonies with distinctive liturgical artefacts (Figure 8.4) that offered generalised identities of individuals in a state of transition towards corporate identity.

These alternatives are – to a certain extent – testable or at least assessable by further scientific work. Within these interpretations there are different degrees of kin relations, most notably the tightness of kin linkages between those buried. However, in the end the most appropriate interpretation is the one that sits most comfortably within the wider



Figure 8.4. A sample of the distinctive liturgical artefacts.

interpretation of Maltese society. The absolute dichotomy between inclusiveness and exclusiveness, elusive theatre and permanent memorialisation may not have been absolute, but the extremes described above give some outline of the potential.

Conclusions

In conclusion, let us return to the full ritual landscape. In our opinion, the risk of sea travel would have restricted access through the continental:island portal of the above ground monuments to a skilled few, symbolised by the great facades and narrow constricted entrances of their architecture. In parallel, although more difficult to prove, the communities buried in the elaborate below-ground funerary complexes of Hal-Saflieni and Xaghra, although apparently a biological cross-section of society may equally have masked the emerging differences within the community, albeit based on a particular descent group or some other emerging corporate group within society. Other members of the community may not have earned a formal resting place. On balance, we therefore currently favour a variation of the first model, that is a version of elite democracy. At present there is no scientific proof of this preference. We simply envisage that the monuments of life rituals were becoming more restricted to an elite in the later (so-called Tarxien) phases of the so-called Temple period and that the funerary practices ran in parallel to this elitism. Unless checked, levelled and regulated, political opportunists will tend to subvert practice, and this was an underlying message of Shanks and Tilley in many of their early works. Theatricality

was certainly part of the ritual process, but it is not yet clear whether this was restricted to a few or applicable to a larger proportion of society. The richness of the evidence available will continue to allow many alternative interpretations to be developed, particularly as the major resources of European Research Council grants come into play. The investment of these resources applied to the mortuary remains should be able to determine a number of key facts, including the tempo of the mortuary ritual and the degree of inter-relatedness of the bodies involved in the funerary ritual. It should also be possible to determine more reliable population figures for the living who provided their bodies, and the level of environmental stress (if any) present in the Maltese islands at this time.

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